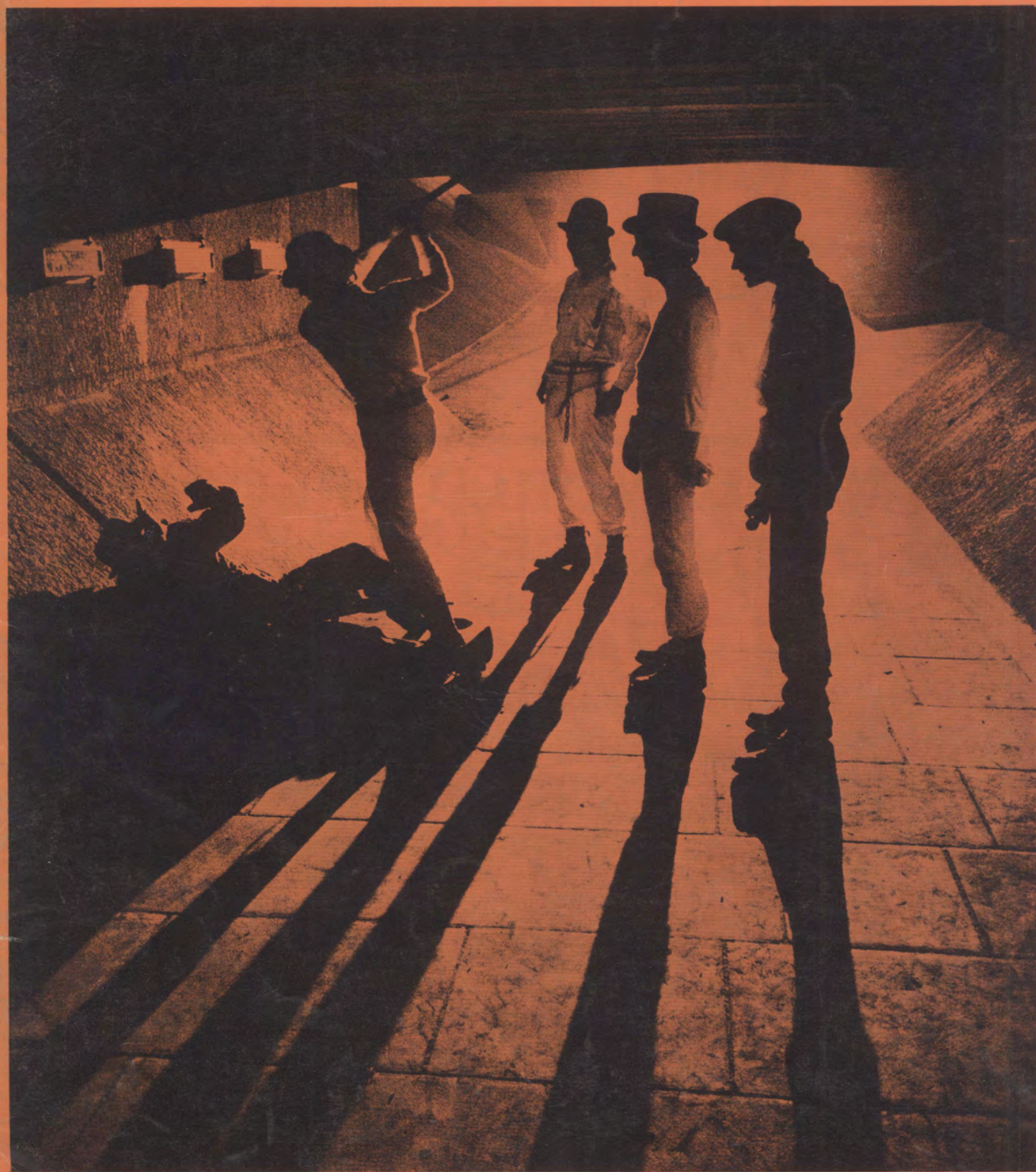


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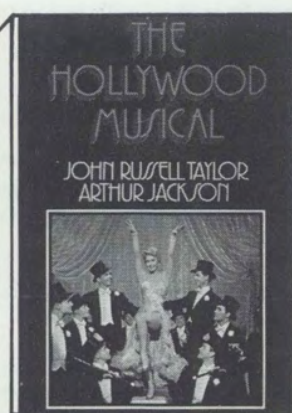
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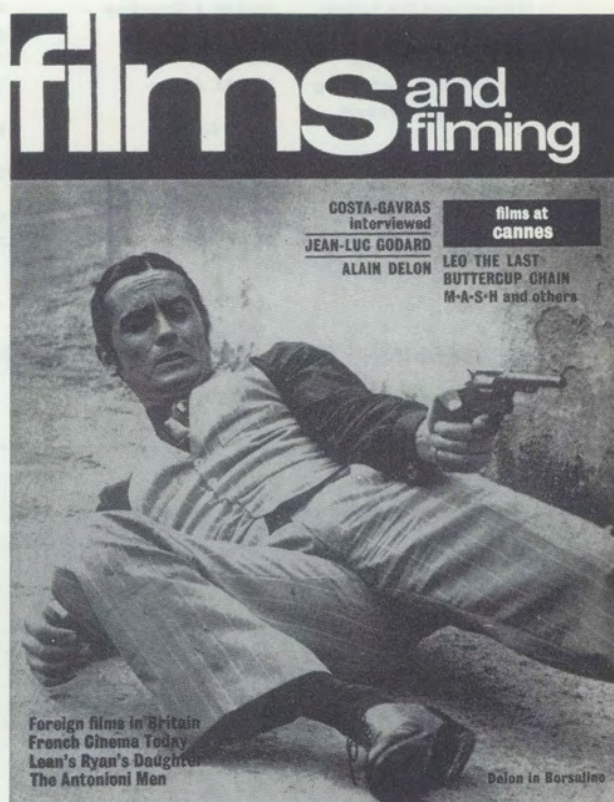
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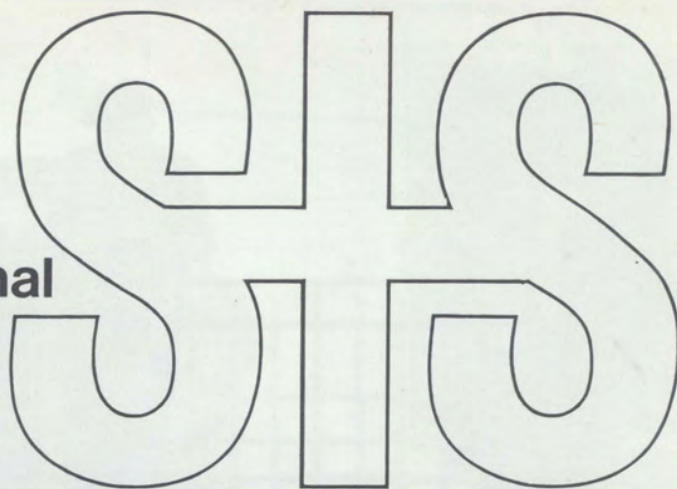
The London Film Festival, the major cinema event of the year in England, will be enlarged this year to include a section devoted to new directors. The London Festival, which is a "Festival of Festivals", a selection of the best new features and shorts from other international film festivals, will be the biggest ever with 44 feature films and an equal number of shorts from all over the world. Among the films to be screened at the NFT during the Festival are the latest work from Japanese director Nagisa Oshima (*The Ceremony*), Yugoslav Dusan Makavejev (*WR-Mysteries of the Body*), Hungarian Miklos Jancso (*Agnus Dei*) and American Susan Sontag (*Brother Carl*). New directors, whose films will have their English premiere at the London Festival, are Theodor Angelopoulos of Greece (*The Reconstruction*), Edgardo Cozarinsky of Argentina (. . .), Donald Shebib of Canada (*Goin' Down the Road*), Karen Sperling of the USA (*Make a Face*), Pascal Aubier of France (*Valparaiso*, *Valparaiso*) and Philip Trevelyan of Great Britain (*The Moon and the Sledgehammer*).

The London Film Festival is open to the general public and tickets are available at the National Film Theatre from 8 November. Members of the British Film Institute receive advance notification of the Festival programme and can send in their postal bookings at the beginning of November. Full details about both membership and the Festival are available from the Box Office, National Film Theatre, South Bank, Waterloo, London SE1 (Tel 01-928 3232/3) or from the Membership Department, British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London, W.1 (Tel 01-437 4355).

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Sight and Sound

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Autumn 1971

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On the cover: Stanley Kubrick's *'A Clockwork Orange'*. Photograph by Dmitri Kasterine

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JOIE DE VIVRE AT THE BARRICADES

The films of Dusan Makavejev

'I see the cinema as a guerrilla operation. Guerrilla against everything that is fixed, defined, established, dogmatic, eternal. It's not irrelevant that the cinema should be at war, because eventually everything is connected. Hollywood is Wall Street and the Pentagon. In the cinema too we must create two, three, an infinity of Vietnams, that's certain. But that doesn't mean that the cinema must *serve* the revolution: the revolution has no need of servants. Everyone has to make his own revolution . . .

'Godard has placed himself at the *service* of the revolution. I don't want to serve . . . I think only that in fighting in the cinema, through our movies, for a freer, more authentic expression, with weapons that can include *joie de vivre* and comedy, we are waging the same war as those who fight on the barricades. It's always the same job of freeing yourself from authority, of breaking down rigid structures, of opening up doors, opening up paths; in short to create a free, open world where every individual can be himself.'

The heroes of all Makavejev's films are striving in one way or another to be themselves: Makavejev himself has definitely succeeded. He is plump, bald and bearded and rarely appears in anything but jeans and an indeterminately mottled washed-out shirt. Upwards from the eyes—which are very direct and searching and mocking—he looks very like Lenin. I last saw him at the Berlin Festival after an excruciating press conference for *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, which he had conducted with extraordinary brilliance. 'But if only I could have done it in Yugoslav,' he mused gloomily. 'I can be really witty in Yugoslav.' In fact he does devastatingly well in English. He is a tremendous and very funny talker, with an endlessly ranging conversation and a strong philosophical bent. 'But all Yugoslavs are philosophical. Not like you English. I love to see an Englishman's face when anyone starts to discuss a question of philosophy. You don't know what we're talking about at all. The English are very concrete. They're nice people.' At this Berlin encounter we ate sausages and laughed a great deal and agreed to meet later to talk about this article. But I was never able to find him again; so that the foregoing and following

quotations come from previous interviews with French journalists.

Makavejev is a Serb (and that, say Yugoslavs, explains a great deal) born in Belgrade in 1932. He graduated in philosophy from the University of Belgrade, where he had also been editor and film critic of the university weekly *Student*. After this he enrolled in the Academy of Film, Theatre, Radio and Television; and while still a student entered a short, *Anthony's Broken Mirror*, in the 1957 Cannes Festival of Amateur Films. Other early shorts, *Don't Believe the Monuments* (1958) and *Damned Holiday* (1958; his first professional assignment, for Zagreb Film) are described as being distinguished by a delight in the fantastic and irrational in everyday life. *Smile 61* (1962) was about the youth brigades; and *Parade* (1962) seems to have been the first of his films to provoke the characteristic mixture of scandal and delight, by the irony of its view of a May Day celebration. Makavejev was already at his barricades.

His first feature, *A Man is Not a Bird*, was shown at the Cannes Semaine de la Critique in 1966. In London it was given a few showings by the New Cinema Club, but aroused no interest among distributors and has now vanished; so that any impres-

sion of it must be from a long memory. It is the story of an engineer who comes to East Serbia to assemble heavy industrial machinery; and falls in love with the daughter of the house in which he is lodging. He is too preoccupied with his work, however, and the neglected girl falls for a younger and more romantic lover.

'The guerrilla can use whatever weapons he likes, paving stones, fire, bullets, slogans, songs. The same with movies. We can use everything that comes to hand, fiction, documents, actualities, titles. "Style" is not important. You must use surprise as a psychological weapon . . . We can even use material taken from the enemy.' Just as *The Switchboard Operator* starts with a lecture on eroticism and the erotic impulse, *A Man is Not a Bird* is prefaced by a talk by a well-known hypnotist and magician, who also appears later in the film. Sequences shot in pure *cinéma-vérité* style are introduced freely into the story film. The most characteristic Makavejev scenes however appear towards the end, with the factory celebrations at which the engineer is decorated for his work. With pleasant irony Makavejev observes the White Rabbit business of the preparation; the erection of banners and slogans and great Lenin portraits; the celebration at which Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is performed for the slightly bewildered factory staff (while meanwhile the heroine is being ecstatically laid by her lover); the morning-after atmosphere of the dismantling.

Makavejev maliciously delights in the rituals of communism. Incidentally we glimpse the same sort of festive preparations in *The Switchboard Operator*, as great banners are hauled up to decorate a building in readiness for some parade. The scene is incidental, and yet directly relevant in the *collage* style which Makavejev develops more and more from the time of this film.

The idea of *The Switchboard Operator* (or *An Affair of the Heart*) came from a newspaper story about a girl who was



'The Switchboard Operator'

thrown down a well by her lover. The switchboard operator meets (so casually that afterwards you hardly remember how) Ahmed, a sanitary worker. They fall in love, set up home and are happy for a while till the girl, like the heroine of *A Man is Not a Bird*, allows herself to be seduced by a younger and more obviously glamorous man. Rejected, poor Ahmed takes to the bottle and in his drunken anger throws the girl down a well. 'The problem was this: how to make a film in which the most important things would be the magical nullities, the senseless moments, and people who don't think? It had to be a love story that was sympathetic and comic, erotic and a bit neurotic, like all human relationships. The

spectator had to be satisfied with the image. Nothing more. Sound brings to what is private and beautiful a historical dimension. And history signifies official and comic.'

As well as the lecture on the erotic—which John Trevelyan found 'unnecessary' and which, together with the pubic hair of the dead heroine in the mortuary, gave the British Board of Film Censors their problems with the film—there is a lecture on eggs, a cookery demonstration, a talk on criminal investigation methods, another on autopsy technique, a demonstration of insanitary housing conditions and the habits of the rat; and the parade for which we saw the preparations is shown on television. A banal intimate story is used to reveal a whole

background of psychological, sexual, erotic, sociological and political connections and non-connections.

Innocence Unprotected, which followed in 1968, was Makavejev's 'second and a half' film. A second viewing, particularly with the hindsight given by *WR*, shows it to be a good deal more complex in method and effect than might at first appear. Makavejev says that his first idea was to make a film, presumably documentary, about people with some special physical or psychic gift, and went so far as to advertise in the papers for suitable collaborators. All the time, however, he had in mind Aleksič, a celebrated strong man and personal childhood hero; and the whole direction of the film was changed when he finally saw Aleksič's own film *Innocence Unprotected*. This was made in 1942. Aleksič was prevented from practising his profession as a strong man, since the Germans prohibited large open-air assemblies. He had enjoyed a commercial success with a short film he had made by stringing together a series of records of his feats, shot by a friend between 1929 and 1940; and this gave him the idea of doing a feature. The money came from a well-to-do man who asked only for a role, and from the sale of plywood sandals which Aleksič invented and made himself. The film had to be shot clandestinely in the evenings with black market stock and equipment in part made by Aleksič, exercising skills learned as a locksmith. The cast were more or less amateurs, and the cameraman was engaged by day in making actualities for the Germans.

The completed film enjoyed quite unexpected success in Belgrade, where the audiences flocked to this first Serbian feature in preference to the officially sponsored German films. Afterwards Aleksič personally peddled (or pedalled) the copy around the countryside on his bike. Ultimately it was banned, which made it all the more ironic that after the war poor Aleksič was charged with having made the film with German approval; though happily he was acquitted. To add to his other troubles Aleksič later quarrelled with his original 'angel', with the result that they cut up the film and divided it between them. Makavejev had to reconcile them in order to get it together again.

The opening title of Makavejev's film describes it as 'a good old film rediscovered, redecorated and commented by Dusan Makavejev.' Makavejev is serious about the qualities of this authentically primitive film: 'It has everything: suffering, love, conflict, rape, humour. And it reveals a remarkably ingenious technique. Seventeen years before Godard's first feature and *Hiroshima mon Amour*, Aleksič integrates in his story film sequences of actuality, a whole series of fragments made between 1929 and 1940 about his own exploits: the document is incorporated with fiction, and becomes the climactic point of the fiction. Aleksič equally discovers the flashback without transition or dissolve; he works with simple cuts; for instance at one moment the girl looks at the portrait of Aleksič, which cuts directly to Aleksič flexing his muscles.'

The original Aleksič film is an unembarrassed tribute to the director-hero's superhuman strength and virtue. It tells a simple tale of a heroine (looking rather like the lamented Kitty McShane) whose 'disgusting' stepmother wants to marry her off to a

Sandwiches among the tombstones in 'Innocence Unprotected'



nasty old man. The girl is naturally in love with the handsome, the good, the irresistible Aleksić, who in the nick of time rescues her from a fate worse than death, leaping from roof-top to roof-top to do so. From time to time the dramatic action is interrupted for some of his more remarkable feats of strength, peculiarly elaborate production numbers, involving dynamite and fuses and complicated mechanical structures.

Makavejev presents long extracts from the film virtually unchanged except for the abbreviation of the original endless credit titles, most of them featuring 'Dragoljub Aleksić, strong man and locksmith', and the omission of some of the director's more daring avant-garde notions, like a thirty-metre sequence of music and blank screen. In the new edition there is also some rather reckless hand-colouring. Intercut are titles, wartime actuality films, and interviews with the various collaborators on the film, now old, plain and humble people still recalling both the pleasures and the rancours of the affair. Only the actor who played the villain has died in the intervening years, and he is affectionately remembered when the others have a jolly chicken picnic on his grave. The wicked stepmother hints that Aleksić took more than his share of the profits, then gets herself up *en travestie* to chirp and smirk out an old vaudeville number for us. The sound recordist eulogises his own formative role in the history of Serbian film art; the light comedian also tosses off an impromptu comic song, while the little heroine, now a rather large lady, just smiles sweetly and remembers. Only Aleksić, who must be nearing sixty, seems scarcely to have aged. Irrepressible, he demonstrates that his muscles are still what they were, and that he can still do some, at least, of his old feats. He bends an iron bar with his teeth, riskily turns himself into a human cannon, and is last seen in a series of *poses plastiques* with a couple of cheery young amazons.

It is very funny; and yet very loving, and not at all patronising towards its sturdy little hero's simple pride, endearing boastfulness, boyish and unprotected innocence. It might have been sad with its emphasis on time and mortality; but it is not, partly because of Makavejev's belief in the accidental quality in unhappiness which he noted in relation to *The Switchboard Operator*, but more because of the durable optimism of Aleksić. His stature as an authentic folk hero is underlined by the raucous hymn to the hero which recurs from time to time: 'Aleksić, my well-loved land! There are enigmas too: at the climax of one of Aleksić's most beautiful and most surrealistically mindless feats, a chorus blasts out the 'Internationale'.

'The film is born in the cutting-room: I shoot, I listen, I look at the material, and it arranges itself into correct images. I think that I make films like a painter: he paints in red, finds that he needs yellow and puts in yellow. Then he wants blue and puts blue. Then maybe finds that the red is in a bad place, and changes it... I think that most of my colleagues who have real talent lie when they talk about good ideas and good scenarios: the best things in the cinema are born out of improvisation.'

WR: *Mysteries of the Organism* is constructed entirely as *collage*. Behind the

titles, to the accompaniment of vigorous Serbian (?) music, a raw egg is passed messily and suggestively from hand to hand (recalling directly an image in the cookery sequence in *The Switchboard Operator*). The camera draws back to reveal the participants in the game: Milena Dravic with a pair of steel-rimmed glasses on the tip of her nose, Jagoda Kaloper and Miodrag Andric (the postman-seducer in *The Switchboard Operator*). Then follows a series of short nude love-making sequences entitled 'Filme der Sexpol' and explained as being 'put on videotape in Woodstock by the radical underground New York TV group Global Village (Rudi Stern and others), transferred on to film via the art machine called the Erotoscope in the Gallery of the United States of Erotica.'

After this, the film launches into fairly straight documentary about the life, work and persecution of Wilhelm Reich, with interviews with Reich's children, disciples and former neighbours, and scenes, new and old, shot at the Reich Museum at Organon. 'In 1950, when I was still a student, I discovered a book by Reich, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*. I was surprised by the association of Marx and Freud, considered as two great men who had preached the same thing, the liberation of man. What Marx did in economic terms within the framework of society, Freud had tried to do within the human organism: to break the barriers, open the frontiers which limit creativity. I was then studying psychology. The book struck me very much but I could not find anything else on Reich; and it took me another fifteen years to discover that his books were forbidden in the United States during the period of the McCarthyist witch hunts, and longer still to discover that they had remained so until 1957 or 1960.' Reich's books were actually burned in the States; and Reich himself had died in prison in Pennsylvania. 'Reich used to stand every day in the middle of the courtyard, shielding his eyes with his hand from the sun towards which he turned. It seems that even the death of this man whose whole scientific work and life had been extremely symbolic, was a sort of metaphor: the free man dies in prison, the man who has fought for love, dies in solitude.'

From this point on the film is a series of free *collage* variations on the Reich theme, associating a variety of impressions in the cause of investigating the Communism and the Fascism, the liberty and the enslavement, the anarchy and the totalitarianism of the human body, always returning to the Reichian practitioners and their patients in their search for individual liberation. In America Makavejev filmed Tuli Kupferberger, founder of the Revolting Theatre, stalking through the streets of New York, causing surprisingly little stir among the passers-by as he onanistically wields his rifle, at one point accompanied by his own horror-comic political song 'Kill for Peace'. Jackie Curtis (one of the two transvestites from Warhol's *Flesh*) chats about the difficulty of erotic life when you are fairly frequently changing sex. 'Jackie Curtis is such a rich example of the loss of identity. For me it is the loss of identity in America, to build democracy and kill for peace.' There are other interviews with Betty Dodson, an erotic painter, and with Jim



'WR: *Mysteries of the Organism*': Milena Dravic



Jackie Curtis



The arrest of Wilhelm Reich



Buckley, the editor of *Screw*, who is later seen having his penis immortalised in a plaster cast by Nancy Godfrey, an expert in the technique.

Intercut are sequences from *The Vow*, the most alarmingly bombastic of the series of films in which Mikhail Gelovani embodied the figure of Josef Stalin*; a horrific record-film of mentally sick people, filmed by the Nazis expressly to justify Hitler's policies of euthanasia; scenes of a great Pekin rally; and a fictional story in which Milena Dravic and friends advocate the merits and necessity of sexual liberation. Dravic is the theorist, emotionally haranguing the crowds and approvingly looking on ('Ah, we have a visitor!') while Kaloper and Andric copulate acrobatically and pleasurably all over the place.

Sex-lib meets socialist realist culture when the friends go to a Soviet ice-show of horrible kitsch. Dravic, however, goes backstage afterwards and drags home the star of the show, a beautiful, plastic-doll ideal hero from a socialist-realist poster. 'The ballets Russes came to Belgrade and I said to myself, "Oh, what a marvellous bit of socialist realism, these Tsarist costumes and hideous taste."' It is the pop art of the ice rink. So I thought to present the Russians as the Bolshoi on ice, because that's the same sort of taste . . . I couldn't use actuality for Russia, as for America. When I took Russia as the great stereotype, I had pieces of fiction, including this artistic ice-skating champion, Vladimir Ilich . . .'

Drably and meaninglessly quoting Lenin, and patronising the Yugoslavs from his great-power superiority, he resists the rather heavy seduction of the two girls and even emerges, still smiling, from the wardrobe in which they and Milena's older gentleman friend (the pattern is the same as in *A Man is Not a Bird* and *The Switchboard Operator*) have locked him.

Milena Dravic's seduction attempts become less and less subtle, to the point where he indignantly strikes her, his image suddenly fusing with the righteous face of Gelovani-Stalin. Finally, however, she is all too successful. His passion once aroused, he loses all control, and beheads her with his ice-skates. Her severed head is taken to a butcher's shop (recalling the mortuary in *The Switchboard Operator*), where it suddenly comes to life to eulogise the splendours of passion. Meanwhile, the distraught, now liberated Vladimir Ilich wanders, singing (in the voice of the Soviet underground poet himself) Bulat Okudjava's 'Ode to François Villon', an exhortation to God to give mortals the things they most need—'And, God, please don't forget me!'

The song is exquisite and affecting and seems to crystallise the poetic intention and effect of what has gone before, underlying all the bawdy and comedy and rough satire.

* '... A forbidding demonstration of the artistic evils inherent in the monumentally heroic, and the social danger of idolising a living "leader". The effect of the film is of a few mortals on an excursion to Mount Olympus . . . An independent decision not okayed by Jupiter has a tinge of crime that inevitably leads one deeper into Hades. *The Vow* made the figure of Gelovani's Stalin so much more grand and god-like that subsequent films were hard put to it to equal the applauded triumph of Chiaureli. Only Chiaureli and Gelovani could do it so "well" again, in *The Fall of Berlin*.'—Jay Leyda in *Kino*, 1960.

For the film is poetic, and moral and deeply philosophic. Comedy and *joie de vivre* at the ready, Makavejev is at his barricades. But the novelty of the film is that its intention is rather therapeutic than informative. At the disastrous Berlin press conference, the director was pressed by serious German critics to answer frankly, yes or no, if he really believed that the principles of Reich were better fitted to solve the problems of Vietnam and Brazil than those of Stalin or Mao. Vainly he protested that the film was not intended to give cut-and-dried solutions for anything, that above all it was meant to be *funny*. He was visibly cheered and delighted with a young man who protested that the *collage* form was annoying, for just when the Reich bits were having their effect and 'I start to relax and feel myself and my body, you cut away to something else quite different and it's all spoilt.'

Makavejev has himself said: 'We've tried to make a film which has social effects, because so many people are repressed. If the process of repression develops each day in so many situations, then it must be possible to make a counter-repression. In fact comedy is a mechanism of counter-repression; truth is a weapon of counter-repression; joy, every sort of happiness and creation have an anti-repressive action. There are always creative people who make the people around them expand, and provoke social changes. Why not, I thought, try to make a film which can provide such a point of departure? Be such an initiation? Help a lot of people to find their own creativity?'

A film that exists on a multiplicity of levels, *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* is above all the assertion of a free man. Politically it is unaligned, except with revolution. If it attacks the East, the West can take no comfort from the fact, nor claim it as their own. If, however, there is a bias, an indication that Makavejev is a Marxist and a Leninist ('Magnificent Lenin, nervous, mad, passionate, *human*'), it is in the fact that in the American scenes you feel that it is the whole capitalist system which is under attack; in the Soviet scenes, it is the perversion and corruption of the Socialist ideal.

Of course, this is not exactly the way to win friends; and everyone was curious after the film's first showing at Cannes to know how it would be received, especially in the Socialist East. It was a foregone conclusion that it would everywhere be welcomed or condemned, as the case might be, as pornographic. There is, as the *Oz* case and the banning of *Trash* have vividly illustrated, a very large class of people in all societies for whom pornography is very hard to identify, so that they condemn anything which contains certain key words or images, regardless of intention or purport or effect, regardless of the fact that in certain circumstances a flower or a chair or a motor car can be obscene, when copulation or a naked body is not.

Mysteries of the Organism is not in any respect pornographic. In Yugoslavia it was allowed; but then mysteriously withdrawn from the Pula Festival. The most virulent attack predictably has come from the Soviet Union. Western critics who had publicly shown their approval of Makavejev's film were rather pointedly not invited to the Moscow Film Festival; and the press cam-

paign was led in *Soviet Culture* by one N. Vladimirov, an expert in old-style Stalinist techniques, who seemed not to have seen the film. He misreported the action, at least, and was under the impression that it was Lenin, not Stalin, whose image appeared in the film.

'Scarcely returned from Cannes, the actress Milena Dravic . . . rapturously declared to the journalists: "We have already been invited to participate with the film in the festivals of London, Edinburgh, San Francisco and New York." Earlier the actress had carefully provided herself so as to out-strip any rivals in the publicity contest. According to reports in a Yugoslav newspaper, when Milena Dravic was asked by a journalist at the press conference after the screening if people in Yugoslavia used the Pill at the time when the film was made, she produced from her bag a packet of contraceptive pills.

'Thus the journalists received a frank and graphic reply. But one question remains unanswered: what sort of pills did Dusan Makavejev take when he began the picture? Clearly . . . a stiff dose of hatred for Communist morals, together with a little careerist leavening, a fair proportion of admiration for prophets of anti-Sovietism, and stimulant extracts from "sensational articles" in which the bourgeois press extolled Makavejev's predecessors in the field of slander and mockery of Socialist ideals.

'Judging from the publicity given in the Yugoslav press to the "virtuoso juggler"†, he had done very well with his long tours through Western European and American towns . . . Presenting his star turn, at the conclusion of his act, he goes among the audience with his biggest plate between his teeth. Plenty of dollars, sterling, marks, lire and other currency falls into it. Enough for his frock coat and for his heroine's under-clothing—a part of her toilet which, again according to the Yugoslav press, they did not reject only from commercial considerations.'

Since Makavejev's targets are Stalinist politics and cultural decadence, the article claims some odd moral ideals for Socialism. Moreover, Makavejev is accused of pandering to American anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism, regardless of the fact that the bulk of the film is violent attack on large areas of American values. It is hard to believe this unmannerly and ill-informed article represents an official line, rather than a lone voice from a bad old past. In any event, N. Vladimirov only wins support for Makavejev's more human values and his rational road to revolution:

'You needn't be violent to be effective. To fight in the street with paving-stones is to talk the same language as the police of the bourgeois society, it is to rediscover the values of aggression and violence on which this society is built. On the other hand, to act like the hippies, to offer flowers to the cops, forces the cops to find a new way to react. If you are patient, and offer them flowers for long enough, there must come a moment when they give in: there is nothing they can do but weep, go mad, or kill themselves.'

† John Russell Taylor's description in his review in *The Times*, which comes under Mr. Vladimirov's attack.



Jean-Pierre Melville talks to Rui Nogueira about

LE CHAGRIN ET LA PITIE

Marcel Ophuls' film *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, the history of a French town (Clermont-Ferrand) during the Occupation, and the faithful portrait of an age as complex as it was tragic, has been one of the great film events of the Paris season. The film, originally co-produced by French, West German and Swiss television, has been shown on TV in the two other countries, though not, significantly, in France; and it has now been screened by BBC-TV under the title *The Sorrow and the Pity*. Jean-Pierre Melville, who was himself a member of the Resistance and whose own *L'Armée des Ombres* deals with the events of the same years, talks here about a film he admires and a period he is unable to forget.



As you certainly must have noticed just now, when we came out of the cinema, Roland Petit and his wife Zizi Jeanmaire were in the queue of people waiting for the next programme to start. My first reflex was to pretend that I hadn't seen them, so as to avoid having to say hello. I felt as though I was coming out of an illicit screening, a little like being caught leaving a pornographic film, and I felt guilty. Of course I did go over and say hello to them, but even now I still have that sense of guilt which prompted my initial reaction.

This no longer has anything to do with remembering what I was or what I did during the war—rather it's a question of realising, all at once, that in one way or another I feel a sense of solidarity with all those men and women whom we've just been watching. By which I mean that I feel a sense of solidarity with Christian de la Mazière, the French S.S. officer from the 'Charlemagne' division; I feel a sense of solidarity with the woman who slept with the Germans and had her head shaved; I feel a sense of solidarity with the collaborator who gets brutally beaten up; with the Germans who raise their hands over their heads when they are taken prisoners; with the good guys and the brutes, with the uncommitted and the bastards. They were the same age as I was, they were involved—sometimes without realising it—in a tragic adventure.

Some of them were not involved at all. I'm thinking of Raphael Geminiani, who at one point in the film says rather ingenuously: 'Germans in Clermont-Ferrand? I didn't see any, there weren't any.' At first, it sounds incredible. But later, when you think it over, you realise that in 1942 Geminiani was a boy of eighteen and that he had only one passion: cycling. Suddenly it seems entirely possible for a boy from some provincial backwater—a boy who wants to become a champion, who thinks only about his bike, about the shine on his front mud-guard, about his handlebars and his tubular tyres—not to have noticed anything. His only problem must have been quite simply getting hold of rubber tyres, because during the war you couldn't find them anywhere. Let's say that Geminiani is perhaps a false note, but extremely well presented, extremely well placed in this harrowing, enthralling and disturbing film; a film which manages to make even someone who never did anything to be ashamed of, and who by chance and good fortune was on the winning side, feel this sense of guilt.

I feel grubby and I feel guilty, because a war such as the one we knew is a terribly complex business. I personally lacked the distinction of having to consider the question of choice, because I was a Jew. Being in the Resistance if you're a Jew is infinitely less heroic than if you're not. Who, or what, can prove to me that if I had not been a Jew I would have chosen the right side? Mightn't I have said: 'This disintegrating army is all the fault of the Left, the fault of the Popular Front'? Because, after all, that's what many people did say in France. If Pétain was able so easily to take over the government, it's because when they were in power during the war in Spain the French Left hadn't even managed to send a few soldiers or a few planes there.

But it wasn't just the Spanish War that

had undermined confidence in the Left and that enabled Pétain to become the Head of State and a particular brand of French fascism to come to power. On August 25, 1939, just a week before war broke out, we learned that Soviet Russia had signed an agreement with Nazi Germany for the carving up of Poland. Imagine how big a shock it was, not only for young men like me who were Communists at that time, but for all Frenchmen, to discover that an enormous section of the Left, namely the Communist Party, was in agreement with Germany.

I'm going to tell you something that you may perhaps find surprising: I was 21 years old when it happened, and for the first and only time in my life I thought of committing suicide. The world was falling apart, and with it a certain notion of morality. I hadn't yet realised that there was no morality in politics. I thought that the Russians, along with the Americans, were the greatest nations in the world. America represented charm, beauty, wealth, music, cars, refrigerators . . . but Soviet Russia stood for Ideals. On September 3, 1939, I went off to war in a state of complete despair, for there was nothing left to trust in. The discovery of duplicity in politics was one of the most important dates in my life.

What I found most taxing about *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*—and it's precisely what makes it such an intelligent film—was its length. But is it necessary to see quite so much of Captain Helmuth Tausend, the Wehrmacht officer for whom the world is what it is? For him nothing has really changed. He is wearing all his medals and he is very proud and happy to have been a German soldier in the Wehrmacht. When they say to him, 'Really, though, you knew perfectly well what they were doing to the Jews,' he answers, 'I'm sorry, did you say Jews or Youths?' (*Juden* or *Jugend*). I think that he is rather representative of Germany today. She pretends not to remember very clearly or not to hear. You realise that many things have changed and at the same time that very little has changed. That nothing is the same and yet everything still looks the same. Granted, the Rhine is no longer the fatal frontier, but the fatal frontier still exists somewhere else; perhaps it exists outside space, only in time . . .

Anyhow, what I found taxing about the film, as I said, was its length, though by that I don't mean that I found the film long. I find being put through it for four and a half hours more painful than being put through it for two hours. Those people in the audience who are not men of my generation won't experience the film in the same way, since they won't feel this sense of personal implication.

Hitler thought that the French wouldn't hold out as they had done in 1914–1918, but he knew nothing for certain and had doubts about everything. He was a very great psychologist and a master chess player. He always thought carefully before making a move. When he advanced his castle for the Anschluss, his knight for Czechoslovakia, his queen for Poland and his second knight for France—I should mention that I don't play chess, and am simply naming pieces at random—he did so after considerable reflection. And it was only after a great deal of thought that on June 21, 1941, he finally

advanced his king against Soviet Russia. And you have to admit that he was very nearly right. Only he made a strategic error: instead of pressing forward into Russia, he lost time with Yugoslavia. After that mistake, he still hadn't lost the war, but he could no longer win it so easily. The fact that he had to contemplate a second year's fighting, and perhaps a second winter in Russia, already meant not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning. And then, as we know, Pearl Harbour changed everything.

One shouldn't forget, either, that Hitler had a prodigious espionage and intelligence service. You have to realise that Nazi Germany had control over almost the whole of the French provincial press. What hardly anyone realises . . . I'm going to tell you something that is practically a State secret; if I get rapped over the knuckles for it, that's just too bad, it doesn't matter, I'm a civilian. It all began with a small advertisement for Dortmunder beer in various regional and local papers. Later, the German advertisers bought up more and more space—sometimes their advertising covered whole pages—selling beer, agricultural machinery, all types of German goods. Suddenly, they withdrew their advertising. And the loss of all those by now regular advertising pages completely dislocated the finances of these provincial papers. So, inevitably, the directors of those same papers made trips to Munich, or to Baden-Baden, or to Frankfurt, to visit the advertisers and ask them why they had withdrawn. The advertisers invariably answered: 'Because you frequently attack our Führer's regime, and we cannot decently advertise in papers which take such an anti-German attitude . . .' I don't need, I suppose, to tell you the sequel . . .

Before the war, I knew a Nazi spy. He had a very accurate idea of the French mentality. Through the French, he had discovered a *joie de vivre* and a capacity for simple happiness which were unknown to the Germans . . . You have to admit that the French and the Germans are such different kinds of people that there's no risk of ever confusing them. From 1936, after the marvellous revelation of the forty hour week and holidays with pay, the Frenchman's main occupation was preparing for the fortnight's holiday to which he was entitled after his eleven and a half months of work. The French are experts at holidays; they always have been and they still are. It's no coincidence that the big holiday organisations are French, and that our Head of State undoubtedly takes more holidays than any other national leader . . . Bregançon, Fouesnant, Carjac . . . really, there's no end to the list. Espadrilles have practically become our national emblem.

Morally, the French were absolutely unprepared for the 1939 war. As I've already said recently, only the professional soldiers wanted to get into the fighting or behaved well at the front. As a general rule, the poor recruits like me weren't all that eager to become heroes. You know, men are rarely brave and still more rarely bold. One mustn't expect too much civic courage of them, nor physical courage either.

'The French are very fond of soldiers,' says Anthony Eden (Lord Avon) at one point in the film. That is why they turned simultaneously to de Gaulle and to Pétain.

But the confusion in which the French found themselves during this war is absolutely unique. I'm thinking of that interview in the film with Christian de la Mazière, filmed in the same castle of Sigmaringen to which he one day went in his S.S. uniform in order to ask Marshal Pétain whether it was really normal for a French soldier to get himself killed in a German uniform, and if this was really what Pétain wanted. And Pétain wouldn't receive him!

In an article published recently in *Le Figaro*, Louis-Gabriel Robinet wrote that it is now time to forget the issues that divided the French, and that we should let Marshal Pétain be buried at Douaumont, among his soldiers. But it was Pétain who made all those boys who were shot at the Liberation volunteer for the Militia, and they're not going to be buried at Douaumont . . . So why should Pétain be? Not only did he authorise those boys to enlist in the service of Nazi Germany, but in one way or another he prompted them to do it . . .

Another absolutely shattering thing in the film—I must congratulate Marcel Ophüls on it—was to show us Emile Coulandon, who was leader of the Auvergne *maquis* under the name of Gaspard and was chosen as 'Colonel' by his men after a real election, somewhat reminiscent of the Commune's election of officers. During the Liberation March Past, the image is held and a subtitle tells us: 'Colonel Gaspard goes to salute General de Gaulle.' But de Gaulle walks past the young man saluting him without even seeing him . . . It's typical of de Gaulle. In those days he could never quite manage to meet the right people. Put yourself in his place, he had to shake far too many hands . . . Anyway, he was *The Symbol*, as Emmanuel d'Astier de La Vigerie called him.

'Heads must roll,' declares Emmanuel d'Astier at the Liberation. It's horrible! Just now, when I saw that part of the film again, I hated d'Astier as much as Doriot. And yet one day, during the campaign in Italy, when a comrade and I were reading *Sept Fois Sept Jours*, I remember us exclaiming, 'How lucky we are to have a minister who's a poet.' Sometimes, you know, books are more sympathetic than their authors. Though it's undoubtedly very unfair of me to say that, because he was really a fine man. In any event, this old aristocrat was a living contradiction. He was something of a monarchist, then he became both a Gaullist and a Communist at a time when Gaullists and Communists just didn't go together . . . It's very interesting to see in *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* that at the time of the Liberation d'Astier was sounding almost Hitlerian. Maybe all orators have essentially the same style. Lamirand, Doriot and Pétain also addressed the younger generation rather after the style of the Führer.

I said earlier on that I felt a sense of solidarity with everyone . . . But there is one person with whom I feel no solidarity: the Comte de Chambrun, Pierre Laval's son-in-law. And his case is a bad one. He is an international lawyer. He ought to have been able to hit on the right tone for the defence, since in a sense Pierre Laval could be seen as his client. There were a hundred different ways of setting out the case for the defence. Perhaps the best would have been simply to

Robert Phillip Kolker

CIRCUM- STANTIAL EVIDENCE

'Interviews are superfluous . . . The film is our statement.' I suppose David Maysles' comment would be fair coming from any artist. The Maysles brothers (Albert Maysles, cameraman, David Maysles, reporter-soundman, who with Charlotte Zwerin, editor, 'direct' their films) have made or contributed to well over a dozen films since 1955, most of them television documentaries, including the first major film about the Beatles, made in 1964, and *Showman*, a portrait of Joseph E. Levine. But it has been their two features which have caused the most controversy. *Salesman* (1969) is a quiet presentation of four men who try to sell the Bible door-to-door. It reveals much of the pathos and desperation of 'Middle America', and in its chief protagonist, Paul Brennan, presents the predicament of a sad way of life perhaps more accurately than does Arthur Miller's play. *Gimme Shelter* (1971), on the other hand, is a loud virtuoso piece recording the Rolling Stones' 1969 American tour, which ended at Altamont in the most horrifying public concert ever. People were beaten, a man was stabbed to death, and the Maysles got it on film.

Though highly acclaimed, both films have been attacked by some critics on the premise that they are false and manipulative; that, posing as truth, they are lies. The various problems raised by these works remain fundamental to the entire *cinéma-vérité* concept. What emerged from this interview, along with a solid, if necessarily defensive, attempt to put the critics away, was a definite contradiction between the Maysles' notion of spontaneity and the very formal structure of their work. I don't know that the interview will put anyone's mind to rest about the problems raised by *cinéma-vérité* or 'direct cinema', as they call it. It may in fact open up more questions than it answers. If nothing else, it reveals the attitudes and ideas of two very independent film-makers.—R. P. K.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID AND ALBERT MAYSLES

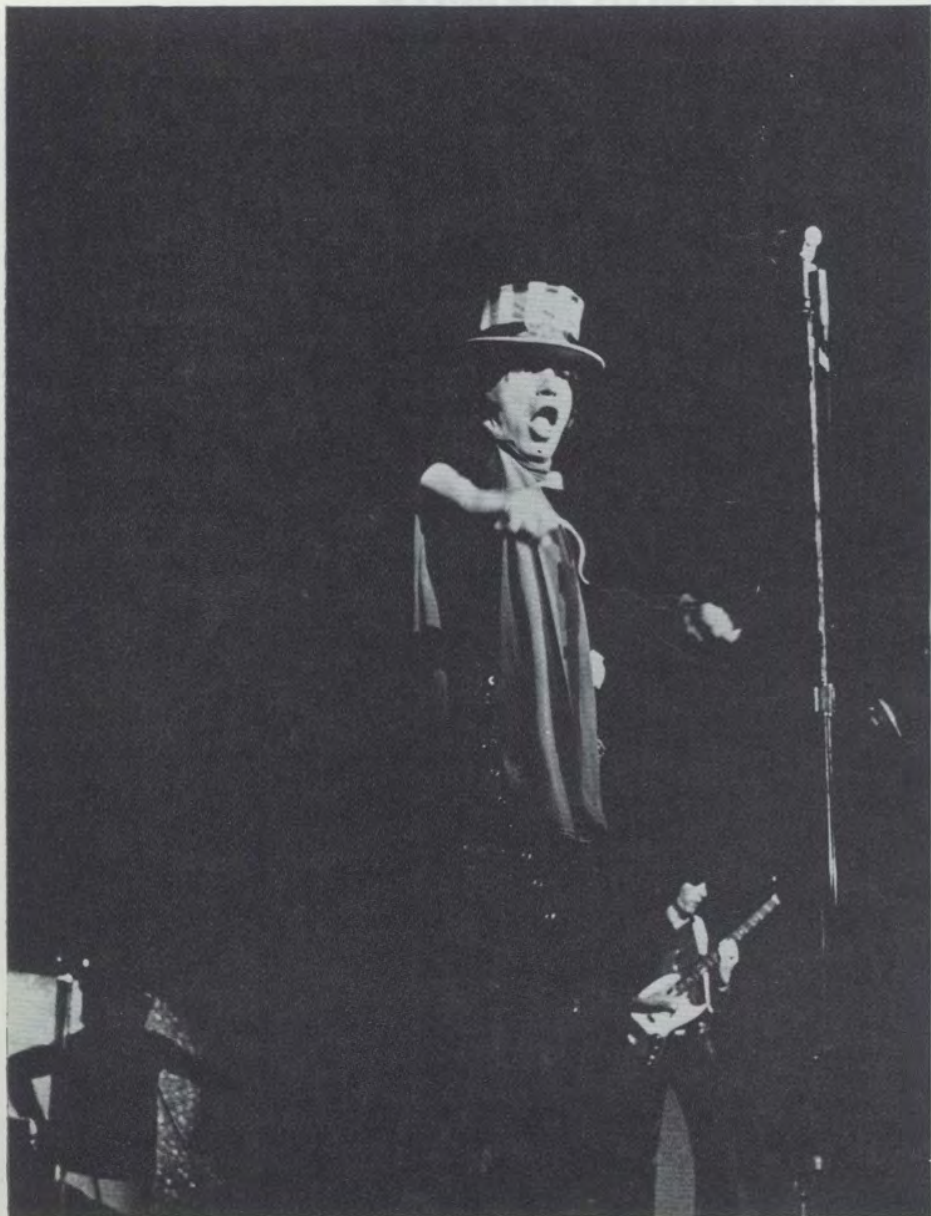
'Gimme Shelter': Mick Jagger





Above: Violence and cameras in the crowd at Altamont

Below: The Rolling Stones on stage



You both came out of University with degrees in psychology. Has your background influenced your ideas of film-making?

ALBERT MAYSLER: John Lennon saw *Gimme Shelter* in Cannes and was quoted as saying: 'My God, this was a real film . . . not any of that intellectual shit . . .' So when people ask me about my psychology background I have to say I don't think it has anything to do with our films. I think, in fact, that reasoning, intellectuality, is probably more than anything the enemy of art, and it would be the enemy of our way of making movies. People like Godard are good in spite of their intellectuality. He has been destroying himself as an artist by trying to lecture.

Does that mean you don't have any rational structure or ideas for a film beforehand?

A.M.: Whatever structure there is in the films comes in the editing process, but almost in a secondary fashion. People have looked at our films and said—in *Salesman*, for example—that the cutting was fantastic between Paul Brennan on the train and the sales meeting in Chicago. Another sequence, when he talks about each of the salesmen while driving, is used as the structure for cutting in vignettes of the various salesmen. Those techniques are so unlike us. I took it as a kind of insult more than a compliment. Because the person who was observing those techniques didn't see that the real strength of the film was in its *not* having to depend on those kinds of editing techniques. They are artificial devices. If we had ended up with a film that had been edited in an Eisenstein style, those people would have said, now you're really getting into good movie-making. Whereas we would have been disappointed to have had to resort to those techniques. It would mean that we didn't have in the material juxtapositions of events and people within, say, continuous shots.

But you choose juxtapositions, and if you have a juxtaposition of two sequences available, you'll use them.

A.M.: Yes, but what I think Eisenstein took as the essence of film in the editing process would have destroyed the benefit of spontaneous juxtapositions that occur in filming—in life itself. I think the camera picking up material in an individual shot has great power. It has an ability to convey a truth that will allow the viewer more freedom to make a judgment for himself, therefore to be given something that has a right to be more believable.

So then you withdraw yourself and allow the audience to make of it what they will?

A.M.: No. At both ends we have a greater trust than someone like Eisenstein would have, a trust that the juxtapositions are there outside of ourselves. We have a trust that we are sensitive to pick them up. We have a trust that the audience somehow will find them there. We don't have to arrange it for them in such a way that they are funnelled into a more limited horizon.

But your films are very tightly organised.

A.M.: These films are very tightly structured and composed. Now it's something I don't understand so well, because I am responsible for the photography. If I were very structured in my photography then the film would be a disaster, and I think that if in the editing the structuring took a traditional

kind of importance, as it does in other films, then the films would be destroyed. Somehow or other between us, we preserve a kind of spontaneous quality of the diary and then make a novel out of the film—without committing it to fiction or an artificial kind of structure.

But a writer making a diary is quietly there in the background taking down notes. You are there with camera and microphone, and your presence must affect people's reactions. What we see on the screen is not what we see directly in life.

A.M.: But it is what you would have seen if you had been there and seen it through our eyes. If you follow the arguments about how the camera affects those present, you would come out with the ridiculous notion that the way to make something the furthest from what actually happens is to go near it and film it, and the way to get closest to 'reality' is to use actors and scripts. To film what actually happens, why not just go to it and have faith in recording events as they occur?

DAVID MAYSLER: I think audiences and film critics, in this country at least, are conditioned in such a way that it's very difficult for them to accept non-fiction. Non-fiction has usually meant a boring documentary, not a work of art. I feel certain that if *Salesman*, for example, was a hard-cover book or presented as theatre there would be a totally different reaction.* We are at the mercy of what really happens, which in a way is a limitation and in a way isn't at all. Our work is close to fiction because it's very subjective; it's a long way from newspaper reporting of an event.

A.M.: How could anyone we filmed in *Salesman* or *Gimme Shelter* be anything but what they really are? No one has told them to be different; we don't want them to be different. But we will be damned, and yet we won't let ourselves be damned, by critics who say that our truths are not truths. We won't let ourselves be forced into the position of saying that what we do is entirely objective and so deny ourselves the opportunity to express ourselves subjectively. The critics have this very simplistic thing: if you film a real thing, then it isn't real any more because you are a human being applying some subjectivity to it. Therefore, we won't allow ourselves to take the position of not being human beings. We are. But by the same token we are not going to let this subjective operation imply that we are telling lies. We are not. We express ourselves in an indirect fashion by expressing ourselves through what we find to be interesting around ourselves...

But isn't there a world of difference between the kind of subjectivity we employ and that of a fiction film-maker? Or of a documentary film-maker who believes that his idea, his subjectivity, consists in getting on to film something different from what he sees? His priority would be to show Paul Brennan for what he thinks Paul Brennan is. When he sees that Paul Brennan is different from what he thinks he is, then he either refuses to show that or he refuses to film it in any other way than how he wants to see it. We don't do that.

What is the difference between *cinéma-vérité* and your term 'direct cinema'?

*In fact, the published transcript of *Salesman* does make good reading. (RPK)

D.M.: I think the danger again lies whenever you talk about 'truth'. When you are dealing with reality it seems to make everyone question it, where they wouldn't question a fiction film.

A.M.: Our films are spontaneous eruptions that we find ourselves catching with our cameras. To classify these things is some kind of sin. Nevertheless, people force us into giving it a name. So the name 'direct' came into being—if only because people are set off on a rampage by the use of the word '*vérité*'. I think the word 'direct' is more dispassionate. We go directly to things as they take place, and almost in spite of ourselves we are bound to come up with something that's more truthful.

Are you operating on some kind of 'contract' with the audience? Something that implies you are present at an event, but that what is happening happens whether you are there or not?

A.M.: I don't think it's necessary for the audience to be aware all the time of that dimension of our presence for them to accept the honesty or purity of what we are doing... I regard our films as the purest form of cinema I know of. As great as Bergman's films are, they seem more to me like theatrical pieces. And essentially what I see as cinematic—because only films can do it—is catching hold of reality in a spontaneous way.

Do you think a fiction film is a contradiction?

A.M.: We would be short-changing ourselves if we called fiction films cinematic and ours not. It seems to me that the other films are departures from cinema, where we are right in the middle of what cinema really can do.

Let's talk about some specific things in your two features. It did seem to me that some of the scenes in *Salesman* were so smooth as to have been, if not scripted, at least laid out.

A.M.: No one was ever told what to do. What I don't understand is why anyone would think we would want the people to be any different from what they are. Whatever refinements we make are in terms of cutting things down to smaller lengths. Not in the nature of changing names and places and events. We just don't think those kinds of improvements are improvements. One of the critics said that the greatest moment in *Salesman* was lost because during the silences, when Paul was in the restaurant for example, we didn't put words into his mouth, the words which we would have wanted him to say. But why would we want him to say anything, and what would we want him to say? It would have put a lie to the whole thing. One of the strongest moments in the film was provided there because you knew enough of Paul so that in his silence your own feelings and thoughts merged with his. Had he spoken, it probably would have broken the spell. Had we made him speak, it would have destroyed the whole effect of the film.

But when Paul goes about singing 'If I Were a Rich Man' and the various bits of business he does in the car, aren't those prompted by your being there?

A.M.: I don't know. But I know it's the kind of thing he's doing all the time. I don't for a moment think that he was a different person because he was with us. We won't accept the dubious honour of being labelled 'directors' capable of making actors out of

people merely by the presence of our camera.

D.M.: We don't impose anything on the people we film. We are the servants of our subjects rather than the other way around.

Tell me about *Gimme Shelter*, its origins, how you got involved in it, your intentions...

A.M.: We didn't know what the film was going to be. We just had a childish faith that having seen the Stones and getting along with them, there might be a feature film there. So at our own expense and speculation we stayed with them.

The structure of *Gimme Shelter* is very tight and controlled. What were your editing principles, and at what point did you decide to use the device of intercutting the Stones' responses to what they were seeing on the editing machine?

D.M.: We wanted something to go beyond just the concert and the tour, and we were developing different themes. One of them had to do with filming the detectives and the Angels and some of the aftermath of the killing itself. That material was rather inconclusive because the trial was still going on, for one thing. But as the film began to develop in the editing, we thought the most important thing was to keep it directly on the Stones' experience. We would try somehow to involve them in how they felt about it. Charlotte Zwerin suggested the Steenbeck editing console as a device. The Stones hadn't seen the material and when they asked to see it, it seemed like a good idea to film them reacting to the film rather than interviewing them, for example. A lot of the material of Mick Jagger viewing the film did work out well, so we used it. After doing all that shooting we thought the film needed a much more simple line. Within that line the Stones had in some way to express their feelings about what happened. They don't react with anything more than their expressions in a very simple fashion because they can't explain it any more than we can. Of course, their song '*Gimme Shelter*' at the end of the film is a very eloquent expression of their feelings.

In many ways *Gimme Shelter* is a film about a film. For example, near the end, when the killing is shown full screen, we hear Jagger's voice over saying, 'Can you roll back on that, David?' and you show him, and us, the segment in slow motion and reverse two or three times.

D.M.: No. Everyone seems to misinterpret that, to think it's two or three times. It's once at regular speed and then in slow motion; it stops a couple of times and then the scene continues at regular speed. So the killing is really only in the film twice.

But the point is that you made the film so that it builds step by step to the killing.

D.M.: It does because that was the most important event of the tour. We weren't sure where to put the killing until the final editing. In fact, at one time we were thinking seriously of putting some of the footage at the very beginning.

Did you know a killing had occurred while you were filming?

D.M.: No. That should be pointed out. The cameraman never saw the killing and I was right with him. I didn't see it, and the Stones didn't either, when it happened. The whole stabbing happens in less than three seconds.

A.M.: That's why it was necessary to show

it in slow motion. If the cameraman himself didn't see it, how can the audience?

What was your relationship with the Hell's Angels?

A.M.: They were helping us out. They were carrying some of our magazines...

D.M.: Oh? I didn't know about that. I knew they were guarding the truck I was on...

A.M.: Well, they would lift us up on the stage, for example. But we didn't have the choice whether to like them or dislike them, or accept help or reject help. They were there. If they hit you over the head, as I heard may have happened with one of the cameramen...

Does it concern you that, despite the fact that the film has much more to offer than the sight of someone getting killed, many people are going for the sensation of seeing a freaked-out audience and a killing?

A.M.: Do they go and see it for that reason? I think more than anything that turns people away. Neither of us is an expert in that kind of thing. We wouldn't want to emphasise that part of it in the advertising because it seems as though people are afraid to see the truth, especially a tragic one. It might put them off seeing it.

Are you concerned that you may have been sensationalising a terrible event?

A.M.: If we had been, I don't know how we'd feel about it. We didn't sensationalise it... I don't think Daniel Ellsberg feels guilty about having revealed the Pentagon Papers. Is he sensationalising something? There were some initial reactions to the *New York Times* publishing those papers, that it was sensationalism on their part. Most everybody was highly suspicious of the newspaper's motives for doing it because it was a scoop. And people were highly suspicious of us because we got a scoop on a killing. We did the right thing including the killing in the film.

Someone reported that you cut out Charlie Watts' comment about Altamont: 'Maybe we shouldn't have done it.'

D.M.: That's one of the problems of discussing that kind of material, because it's referred to as 'cut out'. It could also be referred to as 'not cut in'. It doesn't sound so ominous. I could tell you a lot of things that are very interesting but not in the film. It's the same way with a writer. There's a lot of information in his notes that he thinks about putting in the final work. Obviously we're biased about what we do put in. Again, that's why I object to the word 'truth'.

A.M.: One could complain that the best photographed song, 'Queenie', is not in the film.

Why did you choose not to use it?

D.M.: I wouldn't put it that way. Why did we choose to use the other songs? We had so many songs and each is there for so many reasons. For example, 'Satisfaction' just seems to fit in that particular place, it works there editorially. 'Jumping Jack Flash' works at the beginning of the film. Editing is just what works and what doesn't work for you, and 'Queenie' didn't work in the overall structure of the film.

What about the slow motion sequence to 'Love in Vain'? That's a case of creating something that was not 'actually' seen that way.

D.M.: That too wasn't planned. Almost all of the slow motion stuff is not 'Love in Vain',

but we wanted to use the song and we had some nice footage to go with it. Also we wanted it to lead into the sequence of the Stones actually listening to the same song in their London recording studio, and so we put it together. If we had had really good stuff of 'Love in Vain' the way it was played, shot at normal speed, we might not have used the slow motion footage. It's one of those things you find out about because you don't have the material. Although at one time we did think about slow motion—Charlotte and I thought about a lot of optical effects, but then we dropped all that. We had a hundred different formulas for the structure of the film at different stages. It just finally evolved into what it is. We could give you all the reasons why it is that way now, but we couldn't possibly give you those reasons before.

Tell me about the use of the footage by the California police to locate and try the Hell's Angel who stabbed Meredith Hunter.

D.M.: We had the footage and were subpoenaed to show it. We also felt it was our duty to show it because they didn't have any other evidence. We thought at the same time we would film them working with it. Right after the concert, people were sceptical about whether this guy would be apprehended or if anybody would bear witness against him for fear of reprisals from the Angels.

A.M.: In regard to the killing that the film caught, I'd like to see some of the people who complain about the presence of the camera and our own presence affecting reality argue that in court, as the trial was taking place. They'd be laughed out of court. With all the people who were at Altamont, with all that had been written about it, with all that had been known about it, it was that footage which was closest to the truth of what took place. And the court accepted it as such.

But the killer was acquitted.

D.M.: The court determined from the footage that the killing was done in self-defence. It showed the gun [held by Meredith Hunter, the man killed]. There is no other evidence of the gun that we know about.

A.M.: So that footage, which the critics—as with all of our other footage—are so sceptical about, saved a man's life. It shows the end of one man's life and it saved the next man's life by showing what actually took place. Nobody in court could invalidate the footage. The self-defence plea was a complicated business, the footage was circumstantial evidence—it was as complicated as what is seen in the film. Compare what was revealed in that scene and told in all its complexity to what was told in *Blow-Up*. Compare two versions of fiction and truth.

D.M.: I again object to using the word 'truth'. There's so much behind it, the way Altamont was organised, who was responsible... But it was truthful to what went on before our eyes. We didn't tell any lies that we know about. Again the presence of the camera is the objection raised. But in the case of Altamont there were 300,000 people there. There were no set camera positions. It was such a chaotic thing. I can't imagine that anyone was conscious of being filmed, except maybe the Stones. But from what I can gather from talking to them, they say they are in a whole different world when they are performing and they

are not at all conscious of a camera.

How is the film doing at the box-office?

D.M.: It's not the overwhelming success a lot of people predicted. It did break records in New York. We'll have to wait for results from the rest of the country and from Europe... But the fact remains that we made it independently... just the way we wanted to. There is a great deal of satisfaction there.

A.M.: One of the subtle things that may be operating in terms of the success of the film concerns just how much the public, at any given time, is desirous of seeing the truth of their lives. I think that was true of *Salesman*. I think that people just couldn't take it. Right now, the rock scene being what it is, people may just think that *Gimme Shelter* is the voice of doom. Six months ago it might have been different.

D.M.: As we said earlier, our interest has been in making films as one would write a novel or do a painting or even compose a song. Evidently, from what we can gather, people don't go to the movies to experience anything but a very light kind of amusement. I don't think it's going to change us any. *Gimme Shelter* and *Salesman* are unique. There was absolutely no one to tell us how to do them. Every single inch of those films is exactly the way we wanted to make it. You have to pay for that, I guess.

Altamont: 'It was such a chaotic thing...'



IN THE PICTURE

Demy Calls the Tune

A banquet was in progress at the studio in a decrepit part of Ladbroke Grove where Jacques Demy was putting together *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Around tables laden with bits of foliage, goblets, plastic boars' heads and a stuffed swan or two, familiar faces peered out from a fantastic assortment of top-heavy headgear—Donald Pleasence swathed in curling mounds of velvet and grey hair, John Hurt in a turban of reptilian green topped by a giant bat-wing, Diana Dors billowing over the pumpkins in a hat shaped like two immense crimson horns. In one corner a medieval trio played, while an apple with legs offered itself to a hairy Adam and a delightfully pregnant Eve at what appeared to be a crucial moment in a primitive morality drama.

In between rehearsals, in which the camera snaked endlessly through the room among guards in spiked helmets, everyone collapsed in the oppressive heat as if Prince Prospero's midnight had struck again. Just the other side of a squat stone pillar, on which had been dimly painted a demon performing various vague obscenities, fifty rats in long low cages scuffed at sawdust and thrust noses out between the bars.

Demy was calm, cool and charming. Only the third of the *Cahiers* generation to have worked in Britain, he could think of no problems to match those reputedly encountered by Truffaut or Godard; he professed himself content with the way the production was going—and looked it, in an amiably inscrutable fashion. 'In fact there is today no difference between an American, British or French crew, except that the British are the most relaxed.' Had it been, perhaps, the wish for relaxation that had attracted him to the seemingly uncharacteristic subject of *Pied Piper*? Not exactly; the

Hamelin legend had been part of Demy since in Nantes at the age of five he had seen an operetta based on the story, and he had always had it in mind for a film. The opportunity had coincidentally been offered (after Jiri Menzel, in difficult Czech circumstances, had necessarily withdrawn), just as he was considering further work on a draft of the story that he had himself developed some years before. The script by Mark Peploe and Andrew Birkin was tailored to suit the Demy taste, an all-purpose Piper found in the form of the folk singer Donovan, and the perfect location setting was provided by the tiny and immaculately surviving Frankish city of Rothenburg in Bavaria. And there was a budget of \$1½ million—five times what it cost to make *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*.

'I was fascinated by the idea,' said Demy, 'of recreating the extraordinary atmosphere of the Middle Ages with their terror and their magic. As with *Peau d'Ane*, we were dealing with a kind of fairy-tale, but I felt it should be harder and more realistic—a setting of cruelty and stupidity out of which, from time to time, there comes a miracle.' To the slender tale of the piper, the rats, and the children, had been added a team of strolling players (whose simple family life, as in *The Seventh Seal*, enables them to survive all harm), a power struggle among the Hamelin nobility, a burning at the stake for heresy, and a generous dose of plague. Plus half a dozen songs from Donovan.

But tucked into the film as a gentle subplot was something that suddenly began to make sense of Demy's involvement with this curious compilation: the devotion of a crippled boy (the one who *doesn't* quite make it to the Piper's promised land) for the Bürgermeister's daughter, a nymphet Lola. There had to be something here of the unapproachable

fatalism of the Lola films, the sense of lives almost but not quite coinciding as in the Demy musicals.

If there was, Demy was giving nothing away; the finished film would have to speak for him. Encouraged to talk about *The Model Shop*, that introvert gem of a film in which the story of Lola comes heart-stoppingly full circle, he showed similar caution. There had been problems with Anouk Aimée, who had been edgy and unhappy, there had been money complications. But he had been very happy in Los Angeles—the area had qualities of light and colour unlike anywhere else in the world. Like the young man in his film, he had spent hours just driving around the streets with the car radio on. Did he plan eventually to follow Lola back to France, perhaps to revisit with her the tiny, treasured dance-hall where Corinne Marchand and Dorothee Blanck once joyfully entertained the nightly fleets of sailors to the sound of Legrand's bouncing piano? 'For the moment I feel that Lola is finished—I don't think we'll meet again. But I don't know. She's the kind of girl you don't forget easily. . . Maybe she'll turn up one day.'

It seemed he preferred not to make plans too far ahead, and his method of shooting, too, was largely a matter of improvisation. 'It's a question of response to mood, to colours, to what the actors look like and the way they move. I am shooting *Pied Piper* in a series of long tracking shots, using colours that are mainly red, green and brown, and with a sense at the back of my mind that I want to convey the feeling of an early Nazi regime in which ordinary people get pushed around—so that for them the plague will come as a kind of protection. These are ideas that I keep in my head, but it is the instinct of the moment that is important. To work out each shot days ahead would be impractical and very boring.'

As Demy returned to his banquet, a hollow cake, a splendid affair of iced turrets and ramparts,

was being filled with rats ('Our biggest problem,' murmured their trainer, 'was getting them to follow the Piper around. . .'), and Diana Dors was preparing to scream. 'It seems a terribly long time,' Adam was complaining, 'until God comes on.'

PHILIP STRICK

Surrealist Admen

The occasion seems somewhat bizarre. Pierre Prévert and Cavalcanti are in London ostensibly to lend their presence and support to a peripatetic showing of 'Paris on Film', presenting respectively *Paris Mange son Pain* and *Rien que les Heures*. But they have a deeper-laid scheme. Cavalcanti, it seems, has dredged up from some recess of his memory a curious little detail concerning a handful of minute and long-forgotten works by Prévert: a group of advertising films he made around 1934 for various Paris shops and restaurants, which have somehow ended up, via a pre-war Film Society showing, in the National Film Archive. Improbable as it seems, there they are, and we gather together one morning to see them run through on the editola.

Cavalcanti and Prévert make an unlikely couple. Cavalcanti, now 74 according to the books, gives an impression of frailty, but this is belied by his immense energy and devastatingly sharp memory, amounting to total recall on almost any film matter with which he has been directly or indirectly involved during his long career. Prévert (65), on the other hand, is small, neat, with the quick, bird-like movements of a police inspector from one of his own films. He admits cheerfully before the screening that these filmlets had slipped altogether from his memory until Cavalcanti recalled them. 'The only thing I remember now is that in one of them I played Louis XI in a long wig.' Also that they were made with a whole band of surrealists who lent a hand in their spare moments, and that they

'The Pied Piper of Hamelin': Jacques Demy with Donald Pleasence



were fun to make, even if the association with the agency which produced them was short. Jacques Prévert, who had involved himself in the Agence d'Amour (so called not because of any particularly romantic leanings, but because it was run by a M. d'Amour), rather precipitately uninvolved himself, and the would-be advertisers had to turn to more conventional aides.

The films themselves prove to be four (alas not including the one with Pierre Prévert in a long wig), running maybe a minute or two each. The first, for the Galerie Barbès, raises immediate surrealist ghosts by beginning with a very Buñuelian execution in Mexico: a man tied to a chair, watchers from an upstairs window, a raffish firing squad, and an officer in charge who might be Pierre Prévert. (Cavalcanti thinks the condemned man is Jacques Prévert; Pierre Prévert is not so sure.) But when the order is given to fire the squad shake their heads and with mock innocence hold out an empty box of matches. The officer, livid, releases the condemned man and then has a long and ineffective battle to break his sword over his knee, meanwhile berating his men for disgracing him. One steps forward with extravagant dignity: 'We are not savages. We could not possibly

to open a wardrobe, which resists every attempt until finally a telegraph boy rides up with a telegram pointing out that since it was made by Lévitán it is guaranteed to last virtually for ever. And the last is an ingenious piece of animation (perhaps the hand of Paul Grimault, who is also to be seen in these films, may be detected here) about a small table which pursues a couple leaving a spiritualist seance up and down the streets of Paris until at last someone thinks to tie a chalk to one of its legs, at which it spells out on the pavement the Meubles Lévitán guarantee.

Obviously no one (least of all Pierre Prévert) would claim that these minute recovered fragments are works of any great significance. All the same they show, even in their tiny compass, genuine film quality: the everyday scenes of Paris against which most of their fantastic happenings take place are vividly present on the screen, and the holiday mood which pervades them brings back vividly the atmosphere of simple fun which gave rise to a lot of the more substantial works then or subsequently produced by these writers, painters and film-makers in their less relaxed moments. In particular, the one about the impregnable wardrobe, played forward, looks just like the Prévert of *L'Affaire est*

Here, during June and July, Marlène Jobert, Michel Piccoli, Anthony Perkins, Guido Alberti, and above all Orson Welles, were appearing in an adaptation of Ellery Queen's novel *Ten Days' Wonder*, scripted by Paul Gégau, Eugene Archer and Paul Gardner.

At the core of the story is Theo van Horn (Welles), retired in sumptuous leisure with his young wife Hélène (Marlène Jobert) in Alsace after making his fortune in America. Charles (Anthony Perkins), his adopted son, suffers from periodic bouts of amnesia, and has asked his old friend Paul (Michel Piccoli) to visit the house to help cure him. Paul becomes a voyeur in this extraordinary ménage, where the van Horn family dresses in Twenties' fashion and life is rich and happy. The triangle changes into a quadrangle when Paul discovers that Hélène and Charles are madly in love with each other, and van Horn's true character is revealed.

Chabrol still dislikes filming in Paris—and more particularly inside a studio—and feels that the villa perfectly suggests the Gothic aspects of the story (as will the wind and organ music, to be scored probably by Pierre Jansen). He sees Welles' role as comparable in many ways to his Arkadin in *Confidential Report*. 'It's a well-formed thriller, but I'm trying to

two other films. *The Other Side of the Wind* will be a major production in France ('about ten weeks' shooting'), with Marlène Dietrich, Jeanne Moreau, Suzanne Flon, and probably Pierre Fresnay. It consists of two films in one, and concerns a film director's birthday party—a director of John Ford's generation and a Hemingway figure ('not me at all'). 'During the party,' Welles says, 'you see the film he's making. It's not just about films, it's about macho-ism, you know, lots of things, the whole Hemingway stuff.' Welles will not appear in *The Other Side of the Wind*, but several film personalities will be playing themselves, and one day's shooting, with Joseph McBride and Peter Bogdanovich playing bit parts in Hollywood, is already in the can.

The other movie is *The Deep*, which will be released after *The Other Side of the Wind* and was filmed in Yugoslavia, with Jeanne Moreau and Laurence Harvey. 'It's basically a thriller, taking place on a couple of small boats in the middle of the ocean,' Welles says he is no longer a perfectionist on set; the montage is all. 'I'm a fast director, slow editor. I make three days' editing for one day's shooting.'

Other Wellesian sentiments? Depressed about Hollywood, where he feels the companies are again turning away from the individual film-maker, following the success of *Airport* and *Love Story*. Enthusiastic about Jeanne Moreau ('She's a director's dream—she has marvellous spirit as well as a great talent') and Suzanne Flon, as well as Chabrol. And, finally, admitting with grave candour that the stage no longer appeals to him. 'I've lost my vocation for the theatre,' he says sadly, as if the Mercury days were even more remote than his precocity made them.

FELIX BUCHER AND PETER COWIE



Pal Gabor's 'Horizon'

fire on a chair from the Galerie Barbès!' 'Max Ernst!' cries Pierre Prévert triumphantly. 'Now that is Max Ernst!'

The next is a little joke which starts like an orthodox travelogue about the Colosseum in Rome, shows an artist working on a canvas watched by a group of absorbed spectators, and finally reveals that the painting he has produced, to the plaudits of the onlookers, is a childish scribble telling them that to see the real Colosseum they should go to the Colisée Bar in Paris. For Meubles Lévitán there are two. The first shows a group of criminal types using a vast amount of explosive

dans le Sac or *Voyage Surprise*; played backwards at twice the speed (which we did while trying to work out who was in it) it looks shatteringly like early René Clair. There must be a lesson there somewhere.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Welles and Chabrol

Villa Leonhardsau, near Obernai, at the foot of the Vosges and deep in Alsace: an elaborate, ornamental giant of a house, abandoned until the arrival of Chabrol's set designer, Guy Littaye, and his team, for *La Décade Prodigieuse*.

underplay the logical elements of the plot and to make it more poetic if possible.'

'I make a lot of bad movies to support myself,' says Welles, 'and it's nice to be in a good one for a change, nice to be a *putain de luxe*!' He has at long last completed *Don Quixote* ('some time ago, in fact'), and says that Akim Tamiroff has achieved the performance of his life as Sancho Panza. The modern quality of this version is explained by Welles' attitude to the book. 'The characters are the same as Cervantes', but the point is that they never die—they're still with us.'

Welles is also preoccupied with

Hungary Revisited

One secret of the Hungarian cinema's apparent capacity for constant renewal may be the passion it has always shown for organisation and reorganisation—right back to Korda and the four-month nationalisation of the film industry with which he was associated under the short-lived 1919 Republic of Councils. The renaissance of the later Sixties seemed directly linked to the reorganisation in 1963 into four creative groups working independently and with a sense of artistic competition.

As I reported from the Pécs Festival last October, there was then some apprehension about possible changes as a result of the Communist Party Congress. In fact, however, the Congress left the film industry untouched; and it is only subsequently that a total reorganisation has been announced. Basically the four groups are disbanded, to be replaced by two studios working independently of each other and apparently with much more direct commercial responsibility than hitherto.

As of July, however, no one had a very clear idea of how the new system would work, or what its likely effects would be—not even the people most directly responsible, the heads of the two studios. These are Mr. Révész, who is already chief of the studio organisation, and István Nemeskurty, who is one of the most interesting figures in the Hungarian cinema. A former history teacher in the provinces, he began writing film criticism as an amateur, and became an outstanding critic and historian (a shortened, popular version of his monumental history of Hungarian cinema has been published in English as *Word and Image*). Placed at the head of one of the four creative groups, he nursed talents like Gál and Kázdí-Kovács while managing to justify the experiments of his younger directors with frank commercial successes like a remake of the classic *Stars of Eger*, made alongside films like *The Falcons* and *Temperate Zone*.

In the immediate climate of uncertainty about the exact commercial relationships between the production, distribution and export organisations and the Ministry of Culture, there seems to be something of a hiatus in activity and a certain vagueness about who is actually responsible for decisions on scripts and budgets. The major directors are all optimistically working on scenarios; but with few new projects being launched there is a general atmosphere of nerviness and apprehension, and Cassandra bodings of the end of the renaissance.

Among the new films that have emerged prior to reorganisation, the revelation for me is *Horizont* (*Horizon*), directed by Pál Gábor, whose first feature film, *Forbidden Ground*, soberly explored the human and administrative failures exposed in the wake of a factory fire. His new film has not had a very favourable press in Hungary: its understatement and rejection of pretension are not qualities calculated to win the middle-brow bourgeois school of critics which exists in Hungary in about the same dominant proportion as anywhere in the world. For all that, it is one of the truest films on the all too modish theme of the disaffected young. A rather ordinary 17-year-old, living with his tough, widowed, working mum, gets bored with his office-boy job and starts shoving the internal mail down the lavatory, signing the receipt book himself.

Nothing much else happens: he tries to get back into school, but finds he has outgrown that stage in his life; he has a variety of encounters, mostly disillusioning, with elders and contemporaries; he goes to see a psychiatrist. At the end he starts work in a factory; but the prospects are that this job will be no more fulfilling. Beneath the apparently casual incidents, Gábor builds up a complex impression of the relationships of the boy and his elders, and their irreconcilable ethical codes. In an excellent central and key sequence the boy



On location in Alsace: Claude Chabrol, Marlène Jobert, Orson Welles

delightedly returns gratitude for a lift by helping a lorry-driver with his deliveries. The rare experience of satisfaction in this mutual service is dashed when the driver tries to pay him in cash, and is then revealed to be a racketeer.

The shooting and cutting of this consciously lyrical sequence might be a homage to *Every Day Except Christmas*, except that Gábor apparently does not know the film; but there is a direct tribute to Anderson in another sequence where the boy goes to the cinema to see *If . . .* He is enraptured by the film, though only vaguely able to relate it to his own experience; and after the show goes to the box-office to ask when the next performance begins.

Horizon seems to me a truer and more successful—and certainly more attractive—film in its treatment of a contemporary problem than Péter Bacsó's *Outbreak*. This is comparable to Kovács' *Walls* or Sándor Simó's *Besppectacled* in its discussion of the rebellious, gifted, creative worker who is not comfortably accommodated in a bureaucratic system. The film is talky and schematic; and perhaps its appearance of outspokenness is to an extent illusory, for the targets of its criticism—bureaucracy and corruption—are fairly incontrovertible ones. Kovács himself has gone from *Walls* to a film still more garrulous, *Relay Race*, which carries to perilous limits his experiments in associating story film and documentary *enquête*.

Which leaves Jancsó's new film, *Agnus Dei*, not nearly so easy to dismiss, and as controversial, apparently, for Hungarians as for foreign audiences. At first sight (at Cannes, late at night in the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs) it looked rather like a bad parody of the Jancsó universe of windswept plains and ritualistic tormentings. A second viewing indicates that it is very much more than that, but leaves it worryingly obscure in detail. The setting is the era of

Horthy's overthrow of the Republic of Councils; but the film is a medieval pageant or mystery, with familiar Jancsó characters—priests, peasants, soldiers, naked girls and horses—constantly regrouping in new permutations, constantly inventing new cruelties to inflict, calmly and without passion, upon one another. There are biblical allusions, images of Christ and anti-christ, and an equivocal, demonic Daniel Olbrychski, capering, ravishing girls, murdering, scraping a violin, and going off into the same epileptic fits as the anti-christ priest. At his most mystifying, Jancsó is still the Hungarian cinema's most singular artist.

DAVID ROBINSON

Waiting for Murphy

The alleged pornography explosion is worrying more people than the Earl of Longford. A letter in a recent issue of *Today's Cinema*, signed by a Major in the Women's Royal Army Corps, bemoans 'the most salacious, lascivious collection of pornographic street art it has ever been my misfortune to encounter' (she encountered it on a walk up London's Charing Cross Road). The letter looked to be an editorial spoof. The point is that it might not have been. Diehard watchdogs of the moral climate are marshalling a last-ditch defence against the inroads of the 'permissive society'. And for all that incest on the screen has now been licensed for public exhibition, distributors are nervously awaiting the first decisions by the new Secretary of the British Board of Film Censors.

To judge from his comments after the appointment was announced, Stephen Murphy seems prepared to adopt the policy of his predecessor at the BBFC, though fears have been voiced that Murphy's background in the more cautious area of television (where he vetted programmes for Independent Television) may inhibit

his approach. More disturbing, to those who benefited from John Trevelyan's adaptability, are signs that pressure is being exerted in other places; the backlash, in fact, is biting.

Launching his anti-pornography campaign in Parliament, Lord Longford urged that at the very least films should be liable to forfeiture under the terms of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act; and the next step, he suggested, would be to review the BBFC. Responding to the call, and perhaps acting under directives from the Home Office, H.M. Customs and Excise is spreading its net. In June, Donald Richie's *Cybele*, shown at the National Film Theatre in 1969, was impounded under a law which dates to the last century, prompting the film's distributors, Twenty Four Frames, to take an advertisement in the Sunday papers calling attention to these 'Ancient British Customs'. The British distributors of Makeyev's widely acclaimed *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, due to open at the Academy in London, expected trouble. Recently, a batch of British Film Institute films, some sponsored by the Arts Council, spent some time in the Customs sheds.

If the Home Office does take a tougher line, cinema clubs, at present regarded as a safety valve for soft-core pornography, may be the first to feel the pinch. The Government is known to be concerned about the proliferation of these clubs, which show uncensored—largely innocuous—sex-exploitation fare of the like of *The Lustful Turk*. And the Greater London Council, which has often bypassed the BBFC's ruling on borderline cases, is being urged to press for legislation which will make cinema clubs run for profit subject to the licensing laws and the Obscene Publications Act. At the moment, legislation seems unlikely (problems of parliamentary time), though indirect pressure may force the clubs to extend their

present practice of self-censorship.

What worries British independent distributors like Jimmy Vaughan, who handles the Warhol films, is that these various pressures may influence the way in which the censor moves. John Trevelyan, he recalls, supported *Flesh* after the police raid on the cinema showing it, and the film was later awarded an 'X' Certificate. Trevelyan's successor is evidently less enthusiastic about *Trash*. Vaughan showed it to five members of the House of Lords, who reported that it was likely to turn people off drugs. The censor, Vaughan says, was quite unimpressed by this Establishment support, and the film is unlikely to get a certificate.

DAVID WILSON

Time, Transplants and Arthur Clarke

There is no other film festival quite like Trieste, which (with what feels like remarkable speed and staying power) is already in its ninth year. A sense of improvisation continues to emanate from the projection box in the 17th-century open air arena, and titles come and go from the programme in an impulsive sort of way, but the popularity of science fiction has grown in the past decade to the point at which the Festival can regard its audience as assured. The crowds were there even for this year's new curtain-raising programmes, a survey of surrealism organised by Luigi Chiarini, which ranged from the predictable Cocteau and Polanski to the startling double bill of *L'Age d'Or* and *The Trip*.

Heading the jury was Arthur Clarke, making a break with his usual habit of never stopping more than a couple of days in any one place other than Ceylon. Bearing with him a piece of the Apollo 8 heat shield (terrifyingly scorched for much of its width), innumerable anecdotes about astronauts (such as that what Armstrong meant to say was 'One small step for a man...'), and photographs of everything from marine life to scenes from his television documentary *The Promise of Space*, he signalled at an early stage which film would be winning Trieste's top prize, the Golden Asteroid, by commenting that its hero (played by David McCallum in dark hair and a scrubby beard) looked just like Kubrick much of the time.

At his press conference, Clarke was happy to be drawn on his opinion of science fiction in the cinema: 'I've always been convinced that the film medium is one of the best for this subject—proved by the fact that as soon as people started making movies they made science fiction. Méliès is the classic example. The cinema can do things nothing else can do, from the point of view of emotional and aesthetic impact; but there are some things it cannot do, and I think the finale of *2001* is a good example of this. In the novel, I was able to give the intellectual background, the explanation of what was happening. This could not

have been done in the film without destroying its momentum—although at one time we had planned to have explanatory narration. But Kubrick realised that this would have been artistically a great mistake; the film itself, the trip sequence, could produce an impact that would be impossible for the written word.'

This year at Trieste the preference seemed to be for films about transplants, the David McCallum film *Hauser's Memory* (honourably based on Curt Siodmak's novel) setting the pace for no very clear reasons of merit; it was an old-fashioned yarn about a scientist injecting himself with somebody else's memory juices and winding up with a split personality, complete with flash-shot recollections and something nasty in the subconscious. Directed by Boris Sagal with an infallible eye for a cliché, it was vastly preferable to the elephantine Czechoslovakian romp *You Are A Widow, Sir*, in which a man's brain is transplanted to the body of a woman amid interminable plot twists and bathroom gags. Comedy at a subtler level was provided by *La Ragazza di Latta*, an encouraging first film by Marcello Aliprandi, in which the delightful if somewhat over-demonstrative Sidne Rome portrayed the most seductive robot since Brigitte Helm; Aliprandi frequently vanished overboard in a torrent of expressionist satire, but his future looks hopeful. Nevertheless the week really belonged to another newcomer, André Farwagi, whose *Le Temps de Mourir* began with Anna Karina galloping out of nowhere on a white horse with a piece of film showing a murder that had not yet been committed, and despite a modest implausibility or two continued to be compulsively watchable.

PHILIP STRICK

Year of Vonnegut

This winter, we will travel to Dresden and Tralfamadore with Billy Pilgrim on the screen, or watch Rod Steiger playing a long-gone soldier of fortune returning to an America that doesn't like guns any more. For years, the pop novels of Kurt Vonnegut Jr. delighted college and university readers with their Swiftian wit and Kafkaesque despair. Establishment critics, who had previously tucked Vonnegut away as a science fiction writer, took him up with the publication in 1969 of *Slaughterhouse Five*. Inevitably, the movies discovered Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* and a film of his play *Happy Birthday, Wanda June* are the first to reach the screen, with others scheduled to follow.

The experience at the centre of *Slaughterhouse Five* is the 1945 fire-bombing of Dresden, which the young Vonnegut survived as a GI prisoner of war. In the book, Vonnegut's 'persona' is Billy Pilgrim, a meek optician who in mid-career loses interest in helping

people to see physically and begins to try to make them see according to his own light. His mind flashes from recollections of Dresden and its aftermath (as prisoners, Pilgrim-Vonnegut were locked in an underground slaughterhouse meat-locker during the air-raid, so surviving the holocaust), to the banality of his life in contemporary America, to his time warp trips to the imagined planet of Tralfamadore.

George Roy Hill began shooting *Slaughterhouse Five* on January 30th and completed the principal photography in June. The producer Paul Monash, who also did *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* with Hill, acquired the screen rights for the stiff price (by current standards) of \$185,000. The cast is largely unknown—Pilgrim is played by Michael Sacks, a Harvard graduate student—and most of the budget has gone on sets and 'production values'. By chance, Monash and Hill learnt that a section of Prague was to be razed as part of an urban reconstruction scheme. They moved in and filmed the fire-bombing there. Other locations included Minneapolis and New York, while the time travel to Tralfamadore was filmed in Universal's Hollywood studio.

Paul Monash is hopeful that the screen *Slaughterhouse* will be a considerable success. 'It has all come off wonderfully well, much better than anyone could have expected,' he said on the day principal photography ended. 'It will be touching, absorbing and quite funny. I know that Vonnegut has been pleased.'

The author has been much more involved with the adaptation of *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*, which Mark Robson filmed this summer on a 27-day schedule and for a budget of just under \$1.5 million. Vonnegut's play ran both off and on Broadway during the winter of 1970-71, despite so-so reviews. (Stanley Kauffmann: 'It is a disaster, full of callow wit, rheumatic invention and dormitory profundity.') The play is about what Vonnegut calls 'a new kind of American hero—the hero who refuses to kill.' In the screen ver-

sion, Rod Steiger plays the Hemingway character, a sportsman and soldier of fortune who is thought to have died eight years earlier in a South American plane crash. He reappears suddenly after his wife (Susannah York), who has had him declared dead, becomes engaged to a gun-hating pacifist. Robson, whose last comedy was *Von Ryan's Express*, directed Vonnegut's own screenplay in a new-new (old, old?) fashion—three weeks of rehearsal before shooting. The whole film was made at Columbia's Hollywood studio and ranch, and Robson rehearsed the entire cast and crew on fully constructed, fully dressed sets, in costume, with key technicians planning camera angles and lighting. Robson said *Wanda June* was the first film in ten years that he had done entirely in a studio, and that he has 'disproved the theory that to make films inexpensively, one has to go on location.'

If Universal has *Slaughterhouse Five* and Columbia *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*, United Artists has *The Sirens of Titan*, Vonnegut's most science fiction novel. This bizarre tale of the richest man in the world and his Church of God the Utterly Indifferent ranges over so many settings, planets and states that the sheer cost is making United Artists hesitate. But Paul Williams is set to direct, and Vonnegut to write his own screenplay.

Vonnegut's admirers might like best to see *Cat's Cradle* reach the screen. The rights of this book, which begins and ends with a vision of the total destruction of mankind, belong to Hillard Elkins, the impresario of *Oh! Calcutta!*. Producer Harrison Starr (*Zabriskie Point*) has the rights to *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, a story of the magical power of money, which is considered Vonnegut's most subtle and, by implication, least cinematic novel. Finally, Film Sense, headed by Les Goldman and Ron Lyon, has a screenplay by Edward Harper of *Mother Night*. A pop spy yarn, about a double agent who ends up in the cell next to

Rod Steiger and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.



Adolf Eichmann for Nazi war crimes, this 1961 novel contains some of the blackest humour and some of the best action plot lines in Vonnegut's work. Dedicated to Mata Hari, *Mother Night* attacks super patriotism. Its hero is a private pornographer, unable to prove for a long time that he was really in the pay of the US government and unwilling, finally, to save himself from being hanged when proof is unexpectedly offered.

Meanwhile, Vonnegut is variously reported as finishing and abandoning a new book, *Breakfast for Champions*, and a new play. 'Part of almost every American writer's life cycle is this period when the children are grown,' he says. (Vonnegut is now 48.) 'He's menopausal, so he decides to write a play because he's so damn lonesome. You know, writing is really a very lonely business. Henry James wrote a play when he was about my age. Steinbeck, John O'Hara and even Hemingway did it.' The new play is about a woman painter of enormous erotic canvases. 'It's actually based on a real person I met. I went to her studio in New York one day and saw these marvellous erotic paintings in the style of El Greco, as big as Jackson Pollocks. Then, when she was talking about her ideas on sex, she said off-hand: "There must be a place for monogamy somewhere." Well, I knew I had a play.'

In the meantime, the cinema has Vonnegut, it seems.

AXEL MADSEN

NFFC

Perhaps the first point to be made about the NFFC is that it has cost the country remarkably little. 'We are denying the Corporation the opportunity of losing money in the way they have lost it in the past,' says Mr. Nicholas Ridley, Under Secretary for Trade and Industry; and the statement might suggest reckless squandering. In fact, between 1949 and 1970 the National Film Finance Corporation helped to finance 721 features and 170 shorts, representing a total investment of £27.5 million and a total loss of £5,344,674. The loss on actual advances to film production over the 21 years (deducting interest charges, operating costs, the old British Lion loan, etc.) amounted to just under £2 million. Compare that, if one has the heart to, with what some American film companies have managed to lose in the space of only a couple of years.

The second point about the NFFC is that it has operated under perpetual difficulties. It was set up when Harold Wilson was at the Board of Trade; a temporary aid measure which, like so many temporary measures, acquired permanence. It has always been required to function commercially (to try, in other words, *not* to lose money) at the riskiest end of a high risk industry. The NFFC's resources have never been on a scale for backing bigger, theoretically 'safer' productions. When there have been ready alternative



'Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent', Truffaut's new film, from a novel by Henri-Pierre Roche, writer of 'Jules et Jim'. With Jean-Pierre Léaud, Kika Markham, Stacey Tendeter

sources of finance—in the late 1960s, for instance, when American money was backing almost 90 per cent of British production—the NFFC has been unable to share the spoils. Not surprisingly, the NFFC has ended in the black in only six of its 21 years; which underlines both the difficulty of the job it has been doing, and the need that it should be done.

The 1970 Films Act, passed under the Labour Government, extended the NFFC's life, until 1980, and its resources. The Board of Trade was empowered to advance the Corporation a further £5 million. The Tory Government, in which Mr. Ridley is 'films minister' (Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, now head of the Film Producers Association, steered the 1970 Act through the Commons), has now cut this sum back to £1.5 million. A further million pounds is promised to the NFFC, provided that this can be matched by an investment of £3 million from private sources. In fact, the NFFC had itself proposed the idea of a consortium as a means of extending operations. In its 1970 Annual Report it said: 'In the present scheme of things, the risks shared by producer, distributor and financier certainly do not favour the financier. The Corporation is . . . working out certain new financing patterns for discussion with the interested parties.' It is now called upon to try to make the consortium scheme work in much less favourable circumstances.

As far as the NFFC's own future is concerned, the odds might be described as a consortium to nothing. If the £3 million of city finance can be attracted—and Mr. John Terry, NFFC managing director, uses a classic double negative in saying that he is 'not unhopeful'—the Corporation will presumably wither quietly away. Its original, 22-year-old purpose of 'carrying the independent pro-

ducers until the confidence of private investors was restored' might be assumed to have been finally achieved. If the NFFC fails in its endeavours to set up the consortium, that, on present government attitudes, will presumably, unhappily, be that.

Meanwhile, the Corporation is unable to advance further loans, although it is still aiding two features now shooting—Joseph Strick's *The Darwin Adventure* and Sidney Gilliat's *Endless Night*. The revolving fund which is the basis of the operation can revolve no longer. At the moment, Mr. Terry reckons that the Corporation has some £2 million invested in pictures. As the returns come in, any money not required to pay off outstanding loans, interest charges, operating expenses etc., goes back to the Government. The effect is not only to undercut the intentions of the 1970 Films Act. Ironically, the NFFC could find itself having to repay not only the new money advanced since 1970, but some of its original six million. A Catch-22 situation, someone has called it.

NFFC supporters in the press have rehearsed the familiar and convincing arguments about the prestige of British films and, more substantially, their overseas earnings. A lone dissenter, Michael Sarne, called his colleagues 'whining snivellers' and earned a tart rebuke from Mr. John Woolf and the Boulting Brothers. 'Could this be the same Michael Sarne who made *Joanna* and *Myra Breckinridge*? By comparison, we would have thought the commercial record of almost any British film-maker positively shines.'

In the teeth of industry criticism, Mr. Ridley has argued that 'there is no evidence that I am jeopardising anything.' The cinema is 'purely a private industry' and it is not the Government's policy to put money into industry, 'especially

industries like this, which have no strategic or defence implications at all.' But isn't Mr. Ridley's lame duck also Lord Eccles' more swan-like bird? The Government is modestly subsidising the future film-maker (through the National Film School) and the filmgoer (through the BFI's film theatres). If the NFFC goes, there will surely be a case for a subsidy on artistic grounds to the central process of film-making; which could well work out more expensive than the existing system.

The NFFC has helped finance a good many first films, and projects of too independent a character to attract ready commercial backing. Its guarantee, Mrs. Dunwoody has flatly said, 'Is the difference between a film being made and not being made.' Plainly, it would be more orderly and satisfactory to maintain a clear distinction between artistic subsidy and straight commercial aid, and to keep them as separate as they seem to be in the minds of the Government departments concerned. Except, unfortunately, that the cinema doesn't work that way: it is part of its character to be both things at once.

For Mr. Ridley, the artistic argument is 'a red herring'—though one might rather see it as a chicken that sooner or later must come home to roost, if not with Trade and Industry then with the Minister for the Arts. Meanwhile, he sees the success of the Government's strategy for the NFFC as depending ultimately on the producers, 'who will have to make more of the sort of films the public want to see.' Film-makers in both Hollywood and London, looking at the returns on some of those recent projects undertaken in the confidence that the public would want to see them, must wish it were all as easy as a Ministerial statement can make it sound.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE KING

KOZINTSEV'S KING LEAR, BY SERGEI YUTKEVITCH



Sergei Yutkevitch and Grigori Kozintsev started their artistic lives together in the 'heroic' days of Soviet culture, the years following the October Revolution. In 1921-22, when they were respectively seventeen and sixteen years old, they were involved with the slightly senior Leonid Trauberg in the formation of the Factory of the Eccentric Actor (FEKS) and the publication of the 'Eccentric Manifesto'. In 1922, also, both boys exhibited paintings in the celebrated 'Left Stream Exhibition' where Tatlin's 'Black and White Square' was first seen. Punin, the critic, told them disapprovingly: 'If you go on in this way you will end up in the cinema. . .'

Kozintsev ended up in the cinema rather soon, when he made *The Adventures of Oktyabrina* with Trauberg in 1925. Yutkevitch took a little longer, and made his first feature, *Lace*, in 1928, after working as assistant and designer on Abram Room's *The Traitor* and *Bed and Sofa*. Many years later, as (still quite youthful) Grand Old Men of the Soviet cinema both, by chance, attempted the problems of the screen adaptation of Shakespeare. In 1955 Yutkevitch made a brilliant *Othello*; in 1964, after years of gestation, Kozintsev made a *Hamlet* which stands as the most intelligent of all Shakespeare films. Now he has completed his *King Lear*.

Yutkevitch contributed the long critical article on the film, from which the following extracts are taken, to the Soviet magazine *Isskustvo Kino*. Evidently this is an article of outstanding interest, as being by an exact contemporary who has been involved over the years with almost precisely the same artistic problems as Kozintsev. Since it is too lengthy to reprint in full we here publish in a slightly abridged translation the first of its two parts (the second is called 'Ethics and Aesthetics of the Director'), rather than make extensive cuts.

From the first days of the Revolution, the Soviet theatre sought its repertoire. It sought it everywhere, since dramatists had not yet succeeded in writing plays which would reflect the immensity and the poetry of what had happened in Russia after October. To theatre people of that era it seemed that the scale of events demanded above all something cosmic, involving the public. So the first scenarios were for mass spectacles, which were played in the public squares on revolutionary holidays. In the theatres and circuses there were heroic spectacles. In those days Shakespeare, Schiller, Hugo, Gorki seemed to many too mundane. They were to come to them later.

Mayakovsky's *Mystère Bouffe* was, practically speaking, the first play of a truly revolutionary theatre. But the poet was alone. The dramatists of the Proletkult composed abstract choral pieces, which were incapable of appealing to the audiences which nightly crowded the clubs and theatres. The country was hungry for theatre; independent collectives, circles, workshops were constantly springing up.

The young director Forregger opened his Theatre of the Four Masks in his one-roomed flat. Nearby, in two rooms on Spiridonovka Street, was the 'Semperante' Theatre. Vakhtangov's studio was called 'Mansurovski', from the name of the lane in which the future theatre was born in a tiny apartment. In the more spacious rooms of former grand houses, breakaway groups of young people from the Moscow Art Theatre established themselves. In these studios they played everything: Maeterlinck, Chekhov, Lunacharsky. The more progressive sought links with the traditions of popular theatre, hence a heightened interest in the commedia dell'arte and the history of Russian folk theatre.

In 1920 the State Publishing House published the folk drama *Tsar Maximilian*, which the writer Alexei Remizov adapted from a collection of original manuscript

texts. It was a marvellous work, belonging to no known genre, and concerning the adventures of the terrible Tsar Maximilian, his troublesome son Adolphus, the goddess Venus, the giant Knight, King Mamai, the executioner Brambeus, gravediggers and clowns and, naturally, Old Death. It was all intermingled in fantastic buffoonery, a unique juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy.

Remizov wrote: 'To perform *Tsar Maximilian* all that is needed is the most ordinary chair—this will be the throne on which sits the Tsar. The actors stand around the throne in a circle—and this is the chorus . . . The measure of the place is the circle . . . the circle is the whole earth . . . the chorus is the whole people . . . *Tsar Maximilian* is theatre. And to play *Tsar Maximilian* theatricality is necessary. Where and when to play it is all the same: on the squares, in the theatres, in the circus, in a hall, in a room, in the kitchen—anywhere.'

Thus, in revolutionary Kiev of the 1920s, *Tsar Maximilian* was also produced by 15-year-old Grigori Kozintsev in the sitting room of his doctor father's little flat. This was his first production. As a director he was daring, theatrical; and the choice of play was not accidental. Here began Kozintsev's road to Eccentricism, to the first agit films, to Gogol on stage and screen, and ultimately to the revolutionary romantic, Maxim, to Cervantes, and finally to Shakespeare.

Half a century separates his *Tsar Maximilian* from his *King Lear*. And they would seem to have nothing in common, at least to judge them in stylistic terms. But not by chance did the director, embarking on his *Hamlet*, recall the Spanish clowns Fernandez and Frisco. And it seems to me that his approach to the tragedy of *Lear* is also linked, by the finest threads of the complicated process of art, with the impressions of childhood.

In one of his letters to me, after the making of *King Lear*, Kozintsev wrote: 'I am certain

that every one of us, as a matter of fact, in the course of his whole life shoots and re-shoots, in some way, a single film of his own. It's another matter that one happens to be distracted by other work, that often nothing seems to be happening. All the same, this *own film* is made: in your head, through other work, on paper, simply in conversation; but it lives, breathes, somehow prolongs into age something that began its existence in childhood.'

Tsar Maximilian impressed me, as it did Kozintsev, and the links between this popular drama and the theatre of Mayakovsky and Brecht were also apparent. It attracted me to this dramatist and to Shakespeare; but I do not mind admitting that *King Lear* was not among my favourite plays. Indeed, I did not understand it, even though I did not agree with the harshly destructive criticisms of Lev Tolstoi. I conjectured that there must be some clue to the tragedy which it was impossible to perceive if one proceeded only from criteria of psychological justification for the characters' behaviour. There was a paradox in that Tolstoi himself, while condemning Shakespeare for the illogical behaviour of the king, in his own last years appeared to follow *Lear*'s example.

One of the finest interpreters of the role, the actor S. Mikhovels, was struck by this when he was preparing the play for the GOSSET theatre. Viktor Shklovski speaks of this in his book *The Bow String: The Similarity of Difference*: 'Mikhovels read Tolstoi's article on Shakespeare. Tolstoi's objections [to *Lear*] seemed to him very just. But then he thought: but Tolstoi himself gave away his estate, handing it over to his children, and then in the autumn of his days ran away. It's true that he did not die on the heath, but at a railway station; but he wandered off—impossible to explain the reasons . . . The old models, the old structures, as if repeating again the events of Shakespeare's play. Tolstoi, the great critic of Shakespearean structure, rightly criticised Shakespeare's tragedy from a novelist's viewpoint, for its illogicality. It is so: the tragedy is contradictory, and the author, Shakespeare, created the contradictions.'

For myself, I could never overcome the stumbling blocks of those contradictions, which rose up every time I encountered the play of the mad king. There were perhaps two reasons; the first being the weight of theatrical cliché. I saw the tragedy in the theatre, read accounts of great actors' performances, looked at prints depicting the unhappy king; and this shaggy old grey-beard remained intolerable. Nothing in his experience struck any chord of sympathy in me. Also, I persistently sought in this figure something related not just to my own experience but to all of us, my contemporaries of those times. Of all Shakespeare's plays, *Lear* remained too remote.

The play came closer to me for the first time in the theatre through Mikhovels' interpretation.* And not only because I saw a human face, not plastered over with the traditional beard. Apart from the marvellous Fool of Benjamin Zuskin, and the

* Salomon Mikhovels, head of the Moscow State Jewish Theatre from 1928 to 1948, played *King Lear* in 1935.

enchanted woodland setting created by Alexander Tischler in place of the usual castle, nothing in the rest of the production helped me fully to appreciate the peripeteia of the tragedy. But the talent of these three artists at least forced me partially to surrender to the charm of the play.

The second time, again in the theatre, was a production of quite another kind, although once again stripped of traditional features. Paul Scofield's Lear enthralled me so much that for a time I forgot the search for my own personal key to the character. And even though the sound of the English speech as it were detached the play from me—and this in itself heightened its impression—I still did not succeed in fathoming it to the bottom.

The director Peter Brook points to one clue to the problem, in the theoretical postulates of Jan Kott; though I cannot agree with Kott when he tries to establish a link between Shakespearean tragedy and the practice and theory of the present-day Theatre of the Absurd. Defending this thesis, Jan Kott wrote:

'The theme of *King Lear* is the decay and fall of the world . . . Only the Fool . . . has no illusions and does not seek consolation in the existence of natural or supernatural order, which provides for the punishment of evil and the reward of good. Lear, insisting on his fictitious majesty, seems ridiculous to him . . . But the Fool does not desert his ridiculous, degraded king, and accompanies him on his way to madness. The Fool knows that the only true madness is to recognise this world as rational. The feudal order is absurd and can be described only in terms of the absurd.' (*Shakespeare Our Contemporary*)

But the magic of the English production did not help me to see the relevance of the quotations from Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot* so freely used by Kott. The more so since the critic finds seductive analogies not in the strong points of the tragedy of Lear himself, but rather in the scene of the make-believe suicide of the blind Gloucester. Of course here the behaviour of Poor Tom-Edgar might be defined as grotesque or absurd, but basically

it remains realistic. Edgar's madness is assumed in self-defence, and is rather kin to the pretended madness of the Prince of Denmark than to the metaphysical abracadabra of the characters who weary of waiting for Godot.

As it happens, Peter Brook's work on *King Lear*, the very structure of the production and the playing of Paul Scofield, overturn both the frail theatrical props of modish conceptions and the decayed traditions of theatrical cliché. . .

'Lay him to rest, the royal Lear with whom generations of star actors have made us reverently familiar; the majestic ancient, wronged and maddened by his vicious daughters; the felled giant, beside whose bulk the other characters crouch like pygmies. Lay also to rest the archaic notion that Lear is automatically entitled to our sympathy because he is a king who suffers. A great director (Peter Brook) has scanned the text with fresh eyes and discovered a new protagonist—not the booming, righteously indignant Titan of old, but an edgy, capricious old man, intensely difficult to live with. In short, he has dared to direct *King Lear* from a standpoint of moral neutrality.'

This ironic epitaph with which Kenneth Tynan began his review of the Brook production brought me nearer to understanding the play; but my comprehension only became complete with the film version by Grigori Kozintsev. I see Kozintsev's film not as the story of the majesty and fall of Lear alone but as a many-voiced symphony, in which are elaborately intertwined the destinies of different people and the destiny of an age; and where a story which has not been forced into any pattern of interpretation remains close to contemporary experience. It was precisely of this that Alexander Blok dreamed when he published, in the stormy revolutionary 1920s, his 'General Outline for a Historical Film'.

'Translating history from the silent language of the letter to the living language of spectacle, we do not want to take it into the theatre and form it into conventional action and movement, but we want every period, every character and every movement

of that character, to give a vivid and truthful colouring which would impress itself on the spectator's memory, helping him to feel that such and such a man acts, thinks, moves, gesticulates in ways so remarkably like or unlike himself that he might be his ancestor, or the ancestor of his friend or his enemy.'

What, in fact, is the concern of a man of our times with the deeds of an extravagant monarch? In what can he identify himself with him? The play begins with a riddle which the spectator has to solve if he is to sympathise with Lear in all his subsequent misfortunes.

Stanislavski taught the actor the necessity, when working on a role, of imagining for himself the prehistory of the character. He forced him to use his imagination, requiring him to study not only the author and his style and period, but also how to reconstruct the whole interior life of the man he had to represent on stage. He would constantly stop a rehearsal, making the actor repeat the same exit again and again, trying to elicit from him what suggested itself to his mind, what had happened to him before this, how he had come to be in the scene; setting improvisations on the theme, imagining how the hero would conduct himself in circumstances outside the context of the play.

Shakespeare was an actor, but had not the advantage of playing under Stanislavski's direction. He could not answer all the questions Stanislavski would have put to him. Shakespeare the author proposes to the director and to the audience that they themselves work out the prehistory of the action of the king which sets the tragedy in motion. And although there are volumes of analysis on this theme, every actor and director approaching the production must still find his own answer.

Mikhoels also sought it. For him, as later for Scofield, the figure of the old man driven out of his mind, shaking his grey beard and lisping out speeches about the division of his kingdom, was as alien as the cliché of the 'kind father' dispossessed by his ungrateful daughters. Both reduce the force of the tragedy to a series of melodramatic effects of almost pathological pathos. And just as unacceptable was another traditional interpretation: the wise father who is thinking of the well-being of the kingdom when he proudly abdicates, and who is led to ultimate despair only by the deeds of his unreasonable daughters.

An inquiring artist like Mikhoels not only had to take off the crepe beard which had obscured the living features of a human being; he had also to clean away from the tragedy the accrued deposits which obscured its original essence. And it seems to me that Yuri Jarvet, the Estonian actor whom Kozintsev, to everyone's surprise, invited to play Lear in his film, has taken over the baton of Mikhoels. From the very first shots, he establishes a character remote from tradition and from cliché.

But the whole film begins remarkably, not as an incident within the walls of a castle but as an event with repercussions far beyond. It is not only the characters of the drama who are involved but an important new hero: the People.

'In *King Lear*, on the very threshold of the tragedy are the English people, crowding

Regan (G. Volchek), Goneril (E. Radzinya) and Cordelia (V. Shendrikova)





'A file of beggars who might have come from a Brueghel canvas . . .'

ready to burst on to the stage; that popular mass who most of all suffer from overcrowding, from industrial exploitation, from harsh laws against vagrancy and conditions of near slave labour. In this respect *King Lear* is the most popular tragedy of the Renaissance period.'

I must admit that at first sight these lines, from an excellent article by the Soviet art critic O. Ilinsky, struck me as somewhat naive in their sociology; I did not expect them to be justified by the text of the play. But here is the corroborating voice of the director:

'Dame Avarice burst into thousands of hovels . . . Land became a commodity, money. Those who tilled it were driven off and reduced to beggary. Hordes of vagabonds, terrible caravans of human grief, roamed the country. They were ragged, exhausted from hunger, and vainly sought work. They dragged themselves along the roads, leaving by its edge the corpses of those who did not have the strength to go further. So went the future army of hired labour . . . Such the epoch. There was not a single level place to be seen, "only footprints filled with blood." '* (Kozintsev: *Shakespeare: Time and Conscience*)

So the film begins: a close-up of feet toiling through dry, cracked earth. They leave no 'footprints filled with blood'; but when the camera rises and draws back, revealing a file of beggars who might have come from a Brueghel canvas, you begin to appreciate the sense of the artist. Now the whole shot is filled not with stylised silhouettes, but with real people on whose faces life has marked the traces of suffering and poverty. And with them in these first frames appears also the landscape which will become for the audience the leitmotif of the film: gigantic rocky boulders, like those island dolmens which have still not yielded up the secret of their making, treeless hills, a limitless horizon, outlines very unlike the usual gentle landscapes of 'good old England'. Walking wearily, dragging their feet, the moving river of men, gathering

into a single torrent, settles like motionless black lava on the hills before the castle walls.

Why have they come here? What has driven them across the land? What do they want from the king, sheltering within the endless castle wall? And why does their silence and their dumbness seem to hang so wearily and yet so menacingly?

In his shooting script Grigori Kozintsev accompanied these scenes with a toneless, moaning chorus of voices repeating, like a many-voiced echo, the name of the king. But in the film he dispenses, correctly, with the sound of human speech, and only the cry of a bugle, like the herald of some fearful destiny, rises and falls over the motionless crowd.

Silently they await the decision of the king's fate; of their own fate. There still glimmers within them some hope for the next wise act of their ruler. But when he appears before them only to brand his recalcitrant daughter with a public curse, they silently disperse through the land, which is soon enveloped in the flames of war. In these flames their homes are destroyed, and their youngest are killed in the internecine fighting. And although the anger which might overthrow that order which is to blame for their woes does not finally erupt, the very presence, right to the end of the film, of this silent witness pervades it with presentiments of a fatal judgment, carried out in the end on all those who seek to fence themselves off from the tragedy of the people within the high walls of the feudal castle.

Here Kozintsev progressively develops the theme which also marked his treatment of the *Tragedy of the Prince of Denmark*; and one can only regret the more that such a director as Peter Hall, criticising Kozintsev on the grounds that there was 'too much castle' in his *Hamlet*, should have failed to see that herein lay the Soviet director's great strength. For he not only peopled the castle of Elsinore, but drew aside the walls; and he goes beyond the limits of Lear's castle to raise Shakespeare's tragedy to another measure, in which we sense not only the movement of a man's fate, but also the march of history.

By bringing the people to the hills in front of their ruler's citadel in these very first shots of the film, Kozintsev gives the

tragedy a different spirit. The tragedy of Lear really begins here, before the king even appears on the screen. Lear's decision about the division of the kingdom is only another demonstration of that deaf, blind, egotistical will which has marked his whole reign. This we can divine from the aspect of those who have come to the gates of his palace on this sunless morning.

They wait for a miracle, but it does not come. Lear renounces his power not because he is weary or doubts the rightness of his rule. It is the last whim of a vain man, spoilt by the flattery and hypocrisy of his entourage, persuaded that nothing will change the established order. His favourite pastimes will make it easy for him—a hundred horsemen will still accompany him to the hunt, and afterwards he will rest in comfort on the estates of his daughters, now obliged to concern themselves with the daily burdens of a well-ordered state mechanism. So certain of his own infallibility and supremacy is this foolish and capricious power-lover that the thought can never occur to him of what may follow this farce of the division of the kingdom.

'What exactly defines a man's real value—his possessions or his spiritual qualities? Does it depend on his position in life? Or is he this value in and of himself, even though he possesses nothing? And what is the relationship between wealth and the genuine worth of a man?' (Kozintsev: *Shakespeare: Time and Conscience*)

Thus the director defined his task in revealing the philosophy of the play; and carried it out with consistency and conviction. Hence it is that the opening of the film seems to me so convincing, with its contrasts between the images of silent people massed on the naked hills under the empty, whitish skies, and the low wooden ceilings of the royal apartments, dominated by a stifling atmosphere of grovelling and habitual flattery created by the monarch himself.

In his shooting script Kozintsev indicated the scene of the division of the kingdom as taking place in the castle courtyard. But I feel it was not only for technical reasons that in the film he transferred it to the excellent interior set designed by the art director Evgeni Enei,† which seems exactly to convey the feeling of an enclosed and

† Enei was already Kozintsev and Trauberg's art director on *The Overcoat* (1926).

Lear (Yuri Jarvet): the shot 'filmed through the blazing fire itself'



* A reference to a quotation from Leonardo da Vinci which Kozintsev alludes to earlier in the chapter. Describing the likeness of a battle in a tract on painting, Leonardo wrote: 'Indeed, there must not be a single level place: only footprints filled with blood.'

protected room in the palace.

It is about all the court, and not only about Oswald, that Kent says:

Such smiling rogues as these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain
Which are too intrinse t'unloose; smooth
every passion
That in the nature of their lords rebels;
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder
moods . . .

In the chilly palace rooms, only the flames of a vast fireplace warm the withered soul of King Lear. The shot which Kozintsev has filmed through the blazing fire itself seems to me a significant image. Quickly it dies down. Or rather Lear himself extinguishes it; and encounters it again not in his devastated palace but when the fire has spread through his ravaged land. And through the smoke of this conflagration Lear will make his way with Cordelia, this time sharing disaster and suffering with his people.

Here again the old enthusiasm of the director finds an unexpected conclusion. Rejecting throughout the film's first half the method of psychological analysis of those contradictions which so irritated Tolstoi, introducing a harsh, almost plaintive opening, with the people as chorus, emphasising the dramatic conflicts, Kozintsev seems to return to the sources of that theatre which in its time appealed to his young enthusiasm. Through the strictly realistic fabric of the production appears the shadow of another legendary land whose ruler also boasted:

I stand on a rock—the rock crumbles,
I look upon water—the water boils,
I stamp on the earth—the earth shakes,
At my glance a ship on the ocean is shaken.
I shall sit in judgment on Tsar, Tsarevitch,
King, Queen,
And my own troublesome son
Adolphus . . .

The Tsar Maximilian of the folk fable is furious at his recalcitrant offspring who dares to defy him; and likewise following a folklore tradition, the Shakespearean king cannot bear his daughter's disobedience. Only Cordelia and the loyal servant Kent find courage enough in themselves to stand against the lies and hypocrisy of this kingdom of Lear's which is so like that of Maximilian.

In the shooting script, No. 97 indicates a shot which occurs after Lear's speech 'How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little! Lest you may mar your fortunes.' 'Cordelia goes, not changing her gait. The unkind stubbornness appears in her look. The words of Cordelia are a challenge to all the forms of flattery.' And it is thus that the young actress V. Shendrikova plays the role of Cordelia: a bright-eyed girl with a steeply sloped brow which conceals stubbornness and will. You feel there is no drop of blue blood in this daughter of the king—could the master of the castle have begot her with one of his servants, recruited from a nearby vassal village? Is it not a peasant good sense which speaks in her when she dares to stand out against etiquette—her frank words contrasting so sharply with the honeyed and hypocritical monologues of Goneril and Regan?

'Kent is like a big dog, with hair hanging in wisps. On the hide of such a dog are scars and bald patches, the result of years of

fight with packs of other people's dogs. He is violent in his honour, and dry in his affection; his kind heart has become hardened. A chained dog with red, inflamed eyes, guarding his master even in his sleep, ready to grapple with a stranger and tear him to pieces, not allowing himself to be caressed or stroked.' So he appeared to Alexander Blok; and so, admirably, he is played in the film by V. Emelianov. Here are Lear's two true friends, and the extravagant monarch does not perceive them. They disrupt the ceremonial comedy he has planned, and he mercilessly banishes them. He will meet them again, and only then realise the actual bitter truth which they first dared to tell him . . .

The mythical Tsar Maximilian of Kozintsev's youthful production wore a crown of gold paper, following booth theatre tradition. In his realistic film the director excludes all symbolic properties. Lear wears no crown and wields no sword; and his attendant Fool, whom the shooting script described as dressed in dogskins worn inside out with a fool's cap and bells on his head, appears in the film with none of these attributes. Together the pair of them present an admirable picture at the Fool's first appearance, his head poking, shaven like a convict's, from out of the skirts of the king's cloak. And even here Lear is egotistical: the Fool is his property and he hides him, wanting to keep him only for himself.

The angry Lear departs from the castle; and here Kozintsev admirably depicts the ceremonial which has lost all meaning with the collapse of Lear's power. Like the train of a dying comet, an aimless cavalcade drags after the royal carriage—huntsmen with cages in which languish sulky falcons, servants plodding through the mud leading fierce dogs with burning eyes, watch-dogs with nothing left to guard. And in the centre of the procession, carried on poles, a great wooden chest. We do not know what useless chattels it is packed with, or whether the King's hoarded treasure lies under its lid. And here we recall that just such an absurd box was trailed along by another legendary king, called Ubu . . . Perhaps, like Ubu, Lear keeps his conscience in this absurd wooden chest; and then, seemingly out of the chest, appears the Fool, Lear's true conscience, cowering as he sits on the heavy carriage.

It is when the mad King's last illusions crash and he is banished from everywhere that the knights and huntsmen run off, like rats from a sinking ship; and the final crash of Maximilian's kingdom ensues. And precisely from this point, from his ruins, there begins for Lear a new, long and thorny path which will bring him 'from the level of the one-eyed man to the level of all people.'

It might have seemed that the scenic climax of the film, as on the stage, would be the storm scene. In the shooting script, shot No. 566 is described: 'The wind throws Lear off his feet. But he rises and goes forward, a tiny figure against the vast, raging sky.' This shot, however, is not in the film. The technical note on it specifies a process shot; and we cannot know for what production reason it was omitted. However, this particular shot does not seem to me sufficient in the montage phase of the storm. As it happened, it was staged without any hori-

zon, foreshortened from above, in the restricted space and too usual cinematographic image of torrents of rain falling on the King and the Fool.

So it seems to me that although this particular 'loud' shot is no longer the climax of the film, there comes in its place a marvellous discovery of director, cameraman and actor; what I would call a 'quiet' image, as if echoing the words of Cordelia about her father:

he was met even now
As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;
Crown'd with rank fumiter, and furrow
weeds,
With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-
flowers,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn.

It is a marvellous image, the first and only one in the film in which instead of the parched earth, there appears swaying grass. I don't know what kind of grass it is—the heathland feather-grass, maybe—but the stems are gilded, and rustle, shot through with sun, as light and dry as the hair on the head of the mad king. It seems that the scent of these grasses comes out of the screen. Everything is bathed in light. The harmony of man and nature achieves its extreme expression. The Shakespearean words, which Yuri Jarvet quietly murmurs, pour out as if they were a gentle stream, bathing the stems of the field flowers plucked by the beggar king.

It sometimes happens in this way with an artist: it appears to him that this or that image, this or that scene, carries the greatest significance or weight; but in the course of the creative process of art, operating by its own laws, unforeseen surprises occur. I have no doubt that the director thought of the storm as the high point of his film. He found a marvellous overture to it in the bright sky with the threatening, angry clouds foreshadowing a hurricane. Yet the storm crashes out without really stirring our emotions, while the calm that follows it fully expresses the feeling of the artist. In this calm a close-up of Lear-Jarvet, with huge drops of still-wet rain running like tears down his old, dry face, expresses unsentimentally but with tragic simplicity the essence of the creative scheme of the film.

'The old heart in him is also dry and bitter; there is no longer in him those life-giving juices which wash away anger, soften suffering, smooth sharp corners, cover the open wounds . . . Let us try to convey this extreme dryness and poverty in the speeches and in the action of the character . . . To communicate this inspiration but not in a dry and poor manner—that is a task worthy of the artist. For no Shakespearean tragedy is more mature than this dry and bitter tragedy—I insistently emphasise the words, because it appears to me that they contain the truth (i.e., of the play).' (Alexander Blok)

This precept of the poet is carried out by the authors of the film. They bring to the screen the inspiration of the Shakespearean tragedy without being dry or poor; and the unfeeling puppet Tsar Maximilian is nourished, as in the old Russian tales, with the life-giving juices of creation, and changed, finally, from a doll into a man. ■



ROMAN SUMMER

Richard Roud



Marco Bellocchio's 'Nel Nome del Padre'; with Lou Castel (top of page)

Rome in June was all hustle and bustle, arrivals and departures. Pasolini had just left for Romania with Moravia and his wife; some said they had gone to get rejuvenated at the famous Carpathian clinic; others, more plausibly, insisted that they simply wanted to spend their blocked Romanian royalties. Giuseppe Patroni-Griffi had just left for Tunisia to recuperate after the shooting of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, or, as it is operatically called in Italian, *Addio, Fratello Crudele*. A visually stunning adaptation of the John Ford play, the film was shot in English but the English dubbing had yet to be done, so I only saw the obviously unsatisfactory Italian version. Charlotte Rampling looked so good that one longed to hear her; what I wasn't able to find out was whether Patroni-Griffi is going to use the original text or not. Although the film was made in period decors (partly at Sabbioneta, actually, where Bertolucci made his *Spider's Strategy*), Patroni-Griffi has enlisted the services of a contemporary sculptor whose wooden works form a strange and I think not altogether satisfactory contrast with his locations. But all judgment of the film must be suspended until one sees the proper English version.

Another notable absentee was Jean-Marie Straub, who was in Holland trying to fix up orchestra and chorus for his film of Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron*. Bernardo Bertolucci was just getting ready to set off for France to begin his new film for Paramount, *Last Tango in Paris*. But there were other kinds of excitement, too. Practically the first thing I saw walking up the Via del Babuino were mobs of young people coming the other way. A football match just breaking up? But there was no stadium for miles. It turned out that they were all coming from a neo-Fascist rally in the Piazza del Popolo—a rally laid on by the M.S.I. to 'thank' the city of Rome for its support in the recent elections. I would like to say that I had recognised these Fascist hyenas for what they were, but the truth is that they just looked like slightly exalted youths: smiling, happy, elated. What the lesson is there, I couldn't say.

By the time this appears, the great Venice squabble will have been resolved one way or the other; but during my stay in Rome, that was the principal topic of conversation among film people. And I finally was made to understand that the opposition to the Festival director, Dr. Gian Luigi Rondi, was not so much personal as political: it seems that he writes for what is regarded as a Fascist newspaper (or para-Fascist: opinions and/or degrees of caution differ). This, given the recent Fascist victories and that rally, was enough to increase the determination on the part of most of the self-styled 'live forces' of the Italian cinema that he—and the Mostra—should not be allowed to pass. This gave everything a rather strange air, for traditionally the summer in Rome is occupied by the younger directors feverishly finishing their latest work in time for Venice. And even though every Italian director (with the exception of Visconti, Fellini, Zurlini and De Sica) had firmly come out against Venice, many through force of habit, I suppose, were none the less hard at it getting the films ready for the end of August.

Liliana Cavani was finishing *L'Hospite*,



Giuseppe Patroni-Griffi's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore'

her first film since *The Cannibals*. A strange mixture of documentary, fiction and fantasy, *The Guest* is very different from her previous work. The idea of the film came to her during a screening of *The Cannibals* at the Ciné Club of Pistoia, to which the film society had invited some of the inmates (euphemistically referred to as the 'guests' by the doctors and the administration) of a local lunatic asylum. She was particularly interested in those who had been interned by their families; years later, pronounced cured, they still languished because their families simply didn't want them back. She takes the case of Anna, a woman of about forty (played by Lucia Bose) who is allowed to leave in the care of her brother and sister-in-law.

Anna had suffered a traumatic experience years ago when her lover was accidentally killed, but is now quite recovered. Reintegration with society proves difficult, especially when her sister-in-law treats her as something of a freak, and her every divergence from the most bourgeois of norms is considered to be a dangerous relapse. Finally, she can take it no longer, and runs away to the country house where she used to live. There, an old gramophone record of *Pelléas et Mélisande* sets off the fantasy which dominates the whole last half of the film. Lucia Bose stunningly reappears as the young Mélisande, and the story of the opera is acted out in the gardens of the house. Pelléas is 'played' by the young man in the asylum to whom she had become attached. Suddenly, the Maeterlinck phrases are

given a new meaning: 'Qui t'a fait du mal?' asks Golaud. 'Tous, tous,' replies Mélisande both for herself and for Anna. The fantasy grows ever wilder as Miss Bose is also called upon to play Pelléas' mother. Ultimately, of course, the curtain must come down: the police arrive and take Anna back to the asylum, this time forever.

It is always difficult to judge a film in rough cut, but never more so than with one like this, where the film's ultimate workability will depend on very fine adjustments and timing of the finished version. As it stands now, the various parts and moods don't seem quite to hang together. But maybe they will. It was felt necessary to use an actress for the principal part (and Lucia Bose is extraordinary in all three of her roles); but inevitably, the documentary scenes in the asylum are undercut by her very presence. As the camera pans along the wall of the yard, one knows immediately when it comes to Miss Bose: unmistakably an actress, and in the grand manner, too.

No one was working harder than Marco Bellocchio, who is finally making his long-awaited return to the cinema. *Nel Nome del Padre* is indeed his first feature since *China is Near*, four years ago; and although again I saw only a rough cut of the film, I can predict that his admirers will not be disappointed. More like *Fists in the Pocket* than his second film, *In the Name of the Father* even brings us Lou Castel again, though not this time in the starring role. The years have left their mark on Castel—that feverish light

has been put out, and the outlines of that rock-hard face have softened. Bellocchio has this time cast him as one of the down-trodden attendants of the third-rate cram college in which his film is set; and the hero, the Castel replacement, as it were, is a young Franco-German with the cold fire of revolt in his eye. He is in fact a bright student, but he has been expelled from so many good schools for 'insubordination' that this is the only place his father can think to put him.

The film begins in characteristically whirlwind Bellocchio style, the father literally pushing the boy into the school, cuffing him on the head all the while. And in fact, we are back in the surrealist/black comedy vein of *Fists in the Pocket*, though it is no longer an anarchist view of life, but a political one. If Vigo had read Marcuse, so to speak, we might have been given this view of a boys' school. Bellocchio has chosen this subject not so much because he is trying to exorcise a traumatic experience, but because it presents the great dramatic advantage of being a closed world—a model for society which is small and compact enough to be easily handled.

Much of the wild invention of *Fists in the Pocket* remains: the lecture of the missionary who has had his tongue cut out by the Chinese communists, and who talks like someone with a hare-lip, with the boys eagerly crowding around not to hear his words, but to try to glimpse the stump of the amputated tongue. During a sermon on the evils of self-abuse, several of the boys

become so excited that they begin to masturbate in the classroom—until a statue of the Virgin comes to life and strolls among the desks and chairs. The school attendants sleep in a dormitory whose walls are covered with pious Latin quotations; what more natural, then, that when they talk in their sleep they should do so in the tongue of the Vulgate.

It is difficult to write of the film other than impressionistically, because what I saw lasted three hours; the final cut will be about two hours, so one cannot usefully consider either construction or shape. But Bellocchio's genius for the compulsive image, for mobile camerawork, and for that expressionistic choice of faces which just manages to avoid caricature, are well to the fore. And even in this over-long rough cut, so are his sense of pace, his energy, his toughness. If Bertolucci is marble, then Bellocchio is granite.

Or at least, so one might have said up to now. But Bertolucci's various projects (he told me about three) sound less romantic and much tougher than anything he has done previously. Only one of them harks back to the past and to his roots; that is a three-part film to be called *Novecento* or *Twentieth Century*, which will tell the parallel stories of two men, a peasant and a landowner, from their youth when they played together through their gradual separation as they grow older. The three parts will each bear a different emphasis, the first being epic, the second psychological, the third lyrical.

But there is nothing lyrical about the other two projects: one, for next year perhaps, is an adaptation of Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*. The immediate future will be devoted to the shooting in France of *Dernier Tango à Paris*, which is also a departure from his previous work. For the first time, says Bertolucci, this is not a film about my past; maybe, he adds, it's about my future. A man (Marlon Brando) and a woman (Dominique Sanda) are both flat hunting. His wife has just committed suicide; she is about to be married; and they meet in a vacant apartment to which an agent has sent them. Instant passion. They have sex in the empty flat, and they continue to meet in the apartment, which he has taken but not moved into. He tries to persuade her that theirs should be a purely sexual relationship, that sex is all that counts. She is reluctant to accept this view, but finally comes round. By the time he has convinced her, however, he has stopped believing it himself and has fallen deeply in love with her.

Until this time, they had never talked much about their lives and had seen each other only in the flat. But now he tries to enter her life: he contrives to meet her mother; he begins to talk about love, affection; even togetherness. Finally, he pursues her to her house—whereupon, outraged at this betrayal of their pact, she kills him. And it is, in fact, the perfect crime; no one knows of their affair. For the world, she is a heroine: people admire the girl's courage in these days of brutality and violence in defending herself against an unknown intruder.

Bertolucci is not the only Italian director with long-term plans. Now that he has finished his *Decameron*, Pasolini is looking forward to making *The Canterbury Tales*,

and after that, *The Thousand and One Nights*. Since Pasolini is the most articulate of all Italian directors, let him tell us whence came this sudden interest in short story collections. Like all ideas, Pasolini says, this one came to him from the sky. One day he was flying to Turkey for *Medea*, when he suddenly began to think of the opening choral section of the Greek tragedy. And it came to him that he could do a whole film on the choral principle—only this time it would be in a different key. Secular, rather than religious. Earthy, even; gay, lively, crowded with people and light. Because this idea was born outside of any logic, because it was purely instinctive and intuitive, he became extremely attached to it. After all, he says, with *Theorem*, *Pigsty* and *Medea*, he had carried his inspiration along those lines to its limits.

'Perhaps I realised instinctively that I had now to make a different kind of film, one which would take me back to some of the elements of my first films, *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma* and *La Ricotta*. I wanted once again to portray simple, realistic, immediate characters, people who have nothing to do with allegory.' (But wasn't *Mamma Roma* in part allegorical, and didn't *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* raise the story of Accattone the pimp to a more exalted level?) But there were other reasons for the *Decameron*, reasons which will also apply to *The Canterbury Tales*, if not to the tales of Scheherazade. For Pasolini, the world of Boccaccio was that of the breaking up of the Middle Ages: the ecclesiastical-feudal social structure was giving way to the coming triumph of the bourgeoisie. And Pasolini sees in this period of transition the counterpart to what is happening today, with the dominant bourgeoisie now itself in a state of dissolution. 'I sense all around me the possibility of a new explosion of freedom,' says Pasolini. 'I'm also pessimistic enough to think that perhaps it won't occur, but I want to depict it anyway.'

It seems to me that there is, perhaps, much more of nostalgia in *The Decameron*

than there is any sense of looking forward to an explosion of freedom. Pasolini has set his film in Naples, choosing almost exclusively those Boccaccio tales set in that city; the language is largely Neapolitan dialect. 'Naples,' says Pasolini, 'is the only part of Italy that has been left relatively unaffected by our modern civilisation.' If this attitude seems to coincide with that of certain expatriate Englishmen of the last hundred years, it is probably no accident; I cannot help feeling that it reflects a certain personal, if not political, paternalism. To be sure, life is more fun for a Pasolini, an Acton or a Norman Douglas when everyone has his place in society and knows it. And certainly Milan or Turin, home of the aggressive middle classes, are less picturesque than Trastevere was or than Naples is. Artisans do have more charm than Fiat workers; they are more amoral, more free, less success-oriented. The pan-sexual world of Pasolini's *Decameron*, where everyone is happily hopping in and out of bed with everyone else, is indeed appealing; but one can't help feeling that this world Pasolini has created is as fundamentally a wish-fulfilment dream as was that of the famous German baron who draped the youths and maidens of Taormina in classical, but revealing, drapery at the beginning of the century, and photographed them as denizens of Arcadia. There is something condescending, something of the reactionary, even, about this kind of approach to the past.

This being said, however, the film itself is a knock-out. It is a pagan hymn, a celebration of the pleasures of the flesh, and made all the more intense by the surrounding post-medieval squalor and stench. Though I have never succeeded in reading Rabelais with pleasure, the film could be called Rabelaisian in the sense that author's admirers use.

With the exceptions of Pasolini himself (who plays Giotto), and of Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli, and (in a two-second flash) Silvana Mangano as the Virgin, the actors are all unknown Neapolitans. The locations,

► page 202

Liliana Cavani's 'The Guest'



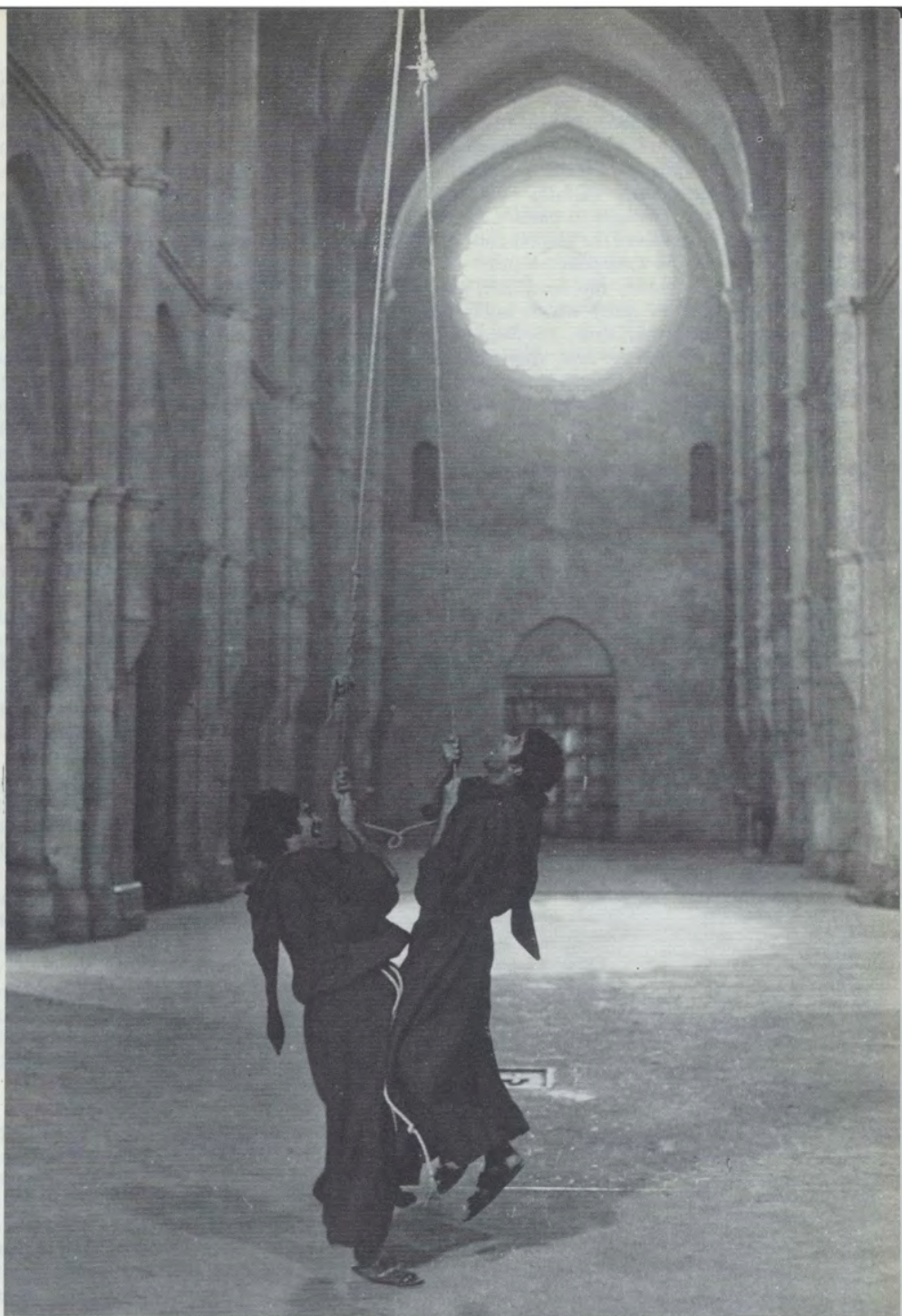


PASOLINI'S





DECAMERON



mostly in and around Naples, are superb, as always with Pasolini. He has chosen ten stories from the hundred that make up the Boccaccio compendium, so that inevitably the film is episodic in nature. But he has used the Giotto story (Giotto comes to Naples with his assistants to paint a fresco) to frame and interweave the second half, just as he has used the Ciappelletto story with Franco Citti to frame the first half, thus achieving a kind of unity which holds the disparate tales together. True, *The Decameron* lacks the formal beauty and discipline of *Uccellacci e Uccellini*, which for me remains still the best of Pasolini's films; but its high spirits and lively narrative are effective substitutes.

In what form Britain and America will see the film, however, remains in doubt. I first saw it in Rome, in the hope that the episode which I heard was to be cut for the Berlin Festival screening would be in. But not a sign of it. It was, of course, the notorious tenth story of the third day, the one which until recently was never completely translated into English, the crucial parts being left in Italian. Apparently, Pasolini's rendering of the hermit teaching the young nun how to put the devil in hell was quite explicit. I never spoke to Pasolini himself, but it is maintained that it was he who cut the episode and that he thinks the

film is better and more shapely without it. Maybe so, but one would still like to have seen it. Maybe in the Japanese version?

When one goes through the preliminary publicity material, one also finds evidence of another episode that was either never shot or, like III/10, cut from the final version. This is the eighth story of the fourth day, about Girolamo who, in love with Silvestra, is obliged by his mother to go to Paris. On his return, he finds her married; there then follows a kind of double suicide.

Other strange things seem to have occurred during the editing. The story of Isabella and the pot of basil ends in the film before it ought to: we do not see her brothers take the pot away from her nor do we see her die; yet in the pre-publicity material the episode is supposed to end that way, as it does in Boccaccio. These things are not very important, although the Isabella story does end somewhat abruptly. The film now runs for 112 minutes; and that is perhaps as much as this episodic kind of picture should go to. And if we miss the ribaldry of III/10, we have the equally explicit story of the deaf-mute who introduces himself into a convent and has all the nuns, one after the other, stopping short only at the old Mother Superior and then only because he is completely worn out. When he breaks his silence to refuse her, her only reaction is to cry 'Miracolo, Miracolo,' and to set the sisters ringing all the bells to celebrate the miraculous healing of the deaf-mute.

But, to return to my question: in what form will we see the film? In Berlin, at the public screenings, the Festival authorities practised a new and ingenious kind of censorship, by simply dimming the arcs during all the sexy scenes, with the result that this Neapolitan fresco seemed like something shot in the darkest part of the Black Forest.

Meanwhile, in Milan . . . Far from the palm trees of Babylon-on-the-Tiber, a few directors and production companies carry on their work quietly amidst the affluence of hard-working Milan. Chief among them, of course, and the most faithful to the Lombard capital, is Ermanno Olmi, and it was in order to see his latest film *Durante l'Estate* that I went there. *During the Summer* started out in Olmi's mind as the story of a professor who falls in love with one of his students; and this in fact was the outline his producer, Gaspare Palumbo, sent to the Ministry as the subject of the film. Now all that is left of this original idea is that the hero is occasionally called Professor.

For, as usual, Olmi sought his actors among non-professionals, and when he discovered that his ideal 'professor' actually earned his living by colouring maps, the profession of his protagonist changed accordingly. So in the finished film, He (the film is Chaplinesque in more than one way: the hero is He, and the heroine She) makes a precarious living by colouring maps for a Universal History. But he is always getting into trouble with the editor over which colours for which country. They want him to colour the Grand Duchy of Tuscany yellow (children like yellow, they tell him, and it's cheerful); but he maintains that the Grand Duchy has to be blue, as blue is much more in accord with the Tuscan spirit.

On this fine point, he refuses to com-

promise, and throws up his job. But, we learn, he has another source of income. He does genealogical research—in a manner of speaking. In a post-office, for example, he sees a man with a noble profile; he follows him about, finds out his name, rushes to the Records Office, and discovers that indeed there was once a noble family called Quercaia. So he sits down, paints a coat-of-arms, and sends it to the perplexed Signor Quercaia.

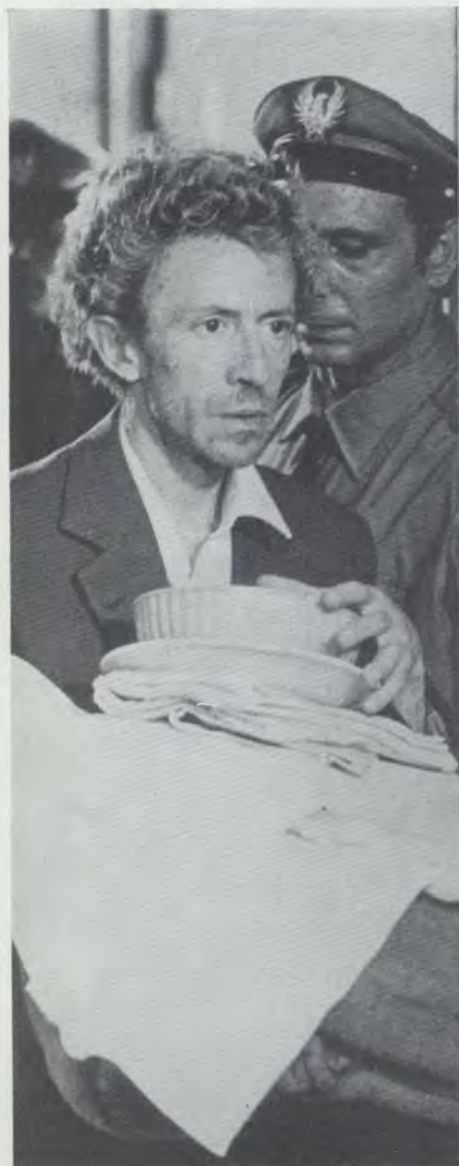
We only begin to grasp the true significance of his work when he meets a young, attractive girl who makes a living by giving away free samples of soap powders. She, at first amused by his unprepossessing appearance, but gradually attracted by his kindness and charm, begins to wonder if He is not perhaps a Count himself. 'More,' he says, 'but then you, too, could be a Princess, but you don't know it yet.' He conceives his aim in life as going about, not *conferring* nobility, but awakening in people the notion that they are nature's noblemen, with the idea that once they are aware of it they will begin to play the part, and in living it, will become it.

Alas, the authorities soon step in. He is arrested for 'false imputation of nobility for profit'—and indeed, he has charged those he dubs modest fees for his research work and for the creation of their coats-of-arms. Worse still, Signor Quercaia was an old-age pensioner, and the Italian law on swindling is far heavier in such cases. During his trial the girl is called to give evidence, and the ironic prosecutor makes her admit that our hero has 'made' her a Princess. 'A Princess, indeed,' he snorts. 'In that case, I must be His Majesty.' 'At this moment,' she replies with the dignity of an exiled Queen, 'you are not even a gentleman.'

Pretty heady stuff for 1971, and there is more to come: the final scene, for instance, with the man behind bars and the girl in the street below, as he calls out to her 'Principessa, Principessa.' I said it was Chaplinesque, and I must confess that it worked on me—the tears really forced their way into my eyes. Because Olmi believes in it, he can make us believe in it, too.

It also happens to be visually his most elaborate film. He has found himself the perfect leitmotif for the slightly menacing modern Metropolis in a hideous skyscraper (not the sleek Pirelli building, but the inelegant one south of the Duomo which has a cantilevered set of upper stories like some grim impersonal fortress); and this threatening image constantly returns. Using the gentlest of zooms, Olmi (who also photographed the film) repeatedly re-situates his hero in the City by keeping him in constant relation to the skyscraper outside his window. He reinforces these minatory movements with the repeated sounds of jets blasting over the empty streets of Milan. This is a summer story, as the title indicates: the city is almost deserted, and He is obliged to go from corner to corner to find a café open. The heat seems to fall solidly between the walls of the buildings like a lead weight, oppressing our protagonists almost as much as the megalomaniac, megalopolitic architecture. And yet the summer also seems to act as the agent that brings the two together if only temporarily. In this deserted street they meet as if they were on a desert island; or as in a city from which everyone who could has fled some approaching disaster. ■

Olmi's *'Durante l'Estate'*



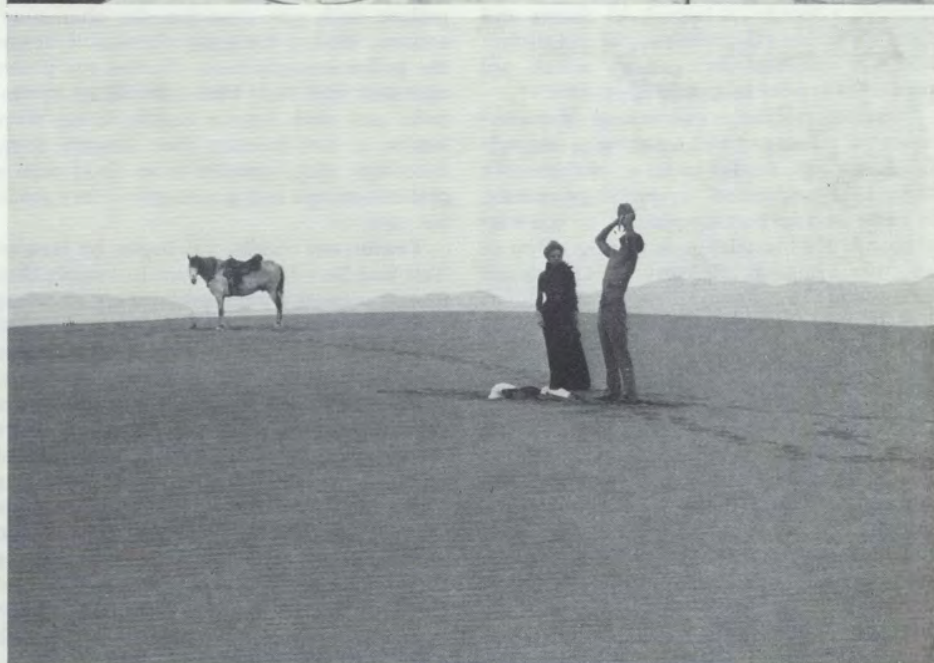
FESTIVALS 1971

BERLIN

After last year's rumpus over the German film *O.K.* by Michael Verhoeven, the choice of the same director's latest work **Those Who Love in Glasshouses** . . . as one of the German entries at Berlin this year ensured a packed house and much speculation. But after the audience had booed and catcalled their way through (and quite right, too, for it was an excessively pretentious sex melodrama tricked out with arty filters and repellent nudity), rumour had it that its selection might have been a subtle revenge by the Festival authorities. With the best will in the world, it was difficult to defend some of the selection committee's choices. Festivals, of course, are useful in charting trends, especially from smaller countries. But what can one say about an Austrian film, announced as being in the style of the German silent cinema, which tells its tedious story almost entirely with a zoom lens and looks like a third generation dupe? Or the desperately fashionable Norwegian entry, with its inevitable naked lady being pursued by a cameraman again obsessed with his zoom, which, surprisingly, ended up with the best photography prize?

Occasionally, one felt that the Berlin audiences were determined to boo at all costs—even Bresson's *Quatre Nuits d'un Rêveur*, reviewed from Cannes, was roughly received as well as being totally ignored by the Jury. One could sympathise, though, with their impatience when confronted with **Bloomfield**, a British/Israeli co-production flamboyantly directed by Richard Harris. Its basically sympathetic tale, about a young boy befriended by a famous footballer (Harris) who is worried about his professional career and his entanglement with sculptress Romy Schneider, is smothered by an expensive-looking melange of Wellesian low-angle shots and Lelouch slow-motion.

Apart from Ichikawa's **To Love Again**, his comeback film after six years and unhappily something of a commercial chore, with an irritating pair of lovers, soupy reminiscences of *Hiroshima* and lots of touristic scene-painting, the last of the oddities worth noting was R. W. Fassbinder's **Whity**. This much-acclaimed German director (of both film and theatre), now turns out four or five pictures a year of extraordinarily variable quality. This one might be described as a 'Southern' (in elaborate Scope and colour) about a weird, sexually ambidextrous family and the Negro servant they love to beat, which ends in mass murder and nemesis in a *Greed*-like desert. Some German critics decided that it was a thoughtful satire on Faulkner and Tennessee Williams country; but its manic



Top: Bulle Ogier and Roger van Hool in André Delvaux's *Rendez-vous à Bray*; centre: R. W. Fassbinder's *Whity*; below: Jacques Tati in *Trafic*

outbursts alternating with long pregnant pauses, and slow panning from one face to another, did not exactly help to clarify its author's precise intentions.

As usual in an uneven festival, the three or four distinctive works swept the rest under the table. Bergman's **The Touch** (his first made mainly in English) surprised by its lack of what someone called 'metaphysical weight'; but this is a different Bergman, perhaps an earlier Bergman, more openly human and wise. The theme bears some resemblance to his television play *The Lie*, and concerns the on-and-off affair between a bourgeois, fairly contented married woman and a visiting American archaeologist, disturbed by his lack of roots (he is the son of wartime refugees from Germany) and by an uncertain relationship with the sick, withdrawn sister whom we encounter only at the end of the film. As well as being more quickly paced and cut, Bergman's classical narrative style here takes on a fresh, lighter mobility, with the camera at first gaily following the wife through a façade of household chores and then becoming a discreetly static and distant observer for bedroom scenes which are models of tender and painful passion.

Bergman re-creates the woman's environment in minute detail, coaxing a marvelously precise, totally interior, performance from Bibi Andersson, in which everything is contained in fleeting glances or the way she waits for the telephone to ring. (Best of all, her English delivery is faultlessly beautiful.) The territory may be familiar, but Bergman's view of the old emotional battlefield still bites home, whether he is swiftly establishing a sense of loss and regret, as in the opening hospital scene, or pinpointing the comic hesitancy of the lovers' first clandestine meeting. Aided by Sven Nykvist's masterly lighting, Bergman characteristically turns the spotless living-rooms and kitchens into a prison for the wife's torment. Regrettably, Elliott Gould, as the visiting American, dislocates the tone at certain key moments—he just hasn't got the style of Bibi Andersson or of Max von Sydow's quietly burning husband. But Gould also has the most complex character, and a somewhat shadowy, underwritten part to contend with.

If Bergman here is more explicit than usual, André Delvaux's third film, **Rendez-vous à Bray**, leaves rather too much out. Beginning by lightly tracing in the relationships during the First World War between two musician friends and their slightly scatty girl friend, he then leaves us to guess exactly why Julien is invited to meet Jacques at a country château and is greeted only by an enigmatic servant (Anna Karina), a piano and a meal of his favourite food and wine. Is it just an elaborate gift to Julien from his enlisted friend in case the war parts them for ever? But then we learn that Jacques has not been in the fighting. Never mind; Delvaux's atmospheric charge is very potent as Julien wanders round the old house, succumbs to Karina for one night and then leaves, puzzled but seemingly strengthened by the encounter, for parts unknown. *Fantômas* appears in a cinema sequence; the girl friend has a splendid scene trying to eat cold meats at a reception without a table; Ghislain Cloquet's camera glides through rooms and corridors lit only by

flickering candles; and the track rumbles with Brahms, Franck and distant thunder. Delvaux somehow makes all these disparate elements his own, and the period mood and the overlapping, perfectly controlled flashbacks exert an ambiguous yet hypnotic spell.

The main discovery for me in the Young Film Forum, which ran alongside the main Festival, was a sombre Greek film called **Reconstruction** by a new director, Theodor Angelopoulos. The story, which documents a murder in a country village, tracing the fate of the couple responsible as they move around evading the police and then accuse each other of the crime, has something of the fate-laden inevitability of *Ossessione*. Like Visconti, Angelopoulos places his characters in a meticulously realised environment. The parched, poverty-stricken Greek village with its cobbles, curiously designed stone cottages and winding roads disappearing in rainy mist, is brought to life in stark black and white; nobody speaks much, and their silences, and the fact that we are asked neither to sympathise with nor condemn the characters' actions, lend a strangely oppressive air to the police investigations. And as the police cars slide into view from behind the mountains and dark figures scuttle along river banks, it was evident that, despite some falterings, Angelopoulos is an artist with a real camera eye and a conception very much his own.

Trafic, one recalls, was begun by Jacques Tati and Bert Haanstra; but inevitably they parted company after preliminary shooting and Tati finished it on his own, although Haanstra still gets a credit. Shorter and more compact than either *Mon Oncle* or *Playtime*, this is essentially a joke film, sometimes thinly stretched, with only a few reminders of the muted, melancholy reverse side of Tati's personality. Yet, from the opening sequence (a vast warehouse with little trotting men carefully stepping over unseen wires) it is unmistakably his own. Loping through the early factory scenes as if he had just arrived from the last film, M. Hulot is soon caught up in his perennial battle with a wickedly mechanised world as he tries to transport an all-purpose caravan (complete with quirky mod. cons.) to the Amsterdam Motor Show. Naturally, he runs out of petrol, gets caught in murderous lanes of traffic and ends up at the Show in time for a torrential downpour.

In a film packed with sly gags, one can note only a few favourites like the elaborate car pile-up with the drivers gingerly emerging from their bent machines like a slow-motion ballet, or the splendidly black joke when Hulot desperately tries to prove that the squashed shape under a wheel is not a dead dog but a woolly jacket. Much praise to Tati's camera team for some agile shooting on the roads; and the exterior colour is probably the best he has achieved.

Neither De Sica's **The Garden of the Finzi Contini** (Golden Bear) nor the American **Desperate Characters**, written and directed by Frank D. Gilroy (shared Actress Prize for Shirley MacLaine), approached this kind of creative level. The De Sica is certainly his best film for many years, soberly tracing the fate of a Jewish family in Mussolini's Italy, yet it all comes out rather thin and stylistically forced, making one regret that it was never made

by Zurlini, who had the property for some time. Gilroy's film is another serious, earnest examination of how hellish it is to live in New York; but its television technique and portentous literary style spiced with calculated *bons mots* soon becomes wearisome. American intellectuals may talk like this, but surely not all the time.

Miss MacLaine and Jacques Tati gleefully scuttled the Awards Ceremony, prancing about on stage and playing little games with the collection of flowers, certificates and statuettes around them (in any case, with the Bergman and Tati out-of-competition, the Jury's choice was severely limited). A more serious atmosphere prevailed when Fritz Lang returned to Berlin to sign the Guest Book of the City, surrounded by several other great names of the German cinema including Lil Dagover and Gustav Fröhlich. Miss Dagover later reminisced about her early days, when she used the housekeeping money to send a photograph to Robert Wiene, who was looking for new stars. Half a year later a letter arrived from the studios and she found herself in *Caligari*. And Murnau? 'He was a gentle, civilised person, and you don't meet many of them in this business.' Unhappily, on the evidence of the latest German films shown here, the Second Golden Age is still some way off.

JOHN GILLET

EDINBURGH

Part of the interest of a film festival lies in seeing the extent to which related ideas and issues are current in films from quite separate parts of the globe. Since film crosses the language barrier quicker than any other (part-verbal) art form, the comparison is genuinely possible. But the question arises: how much are the shared issues a real index of world preoccupations and how much—on the art-as-a-closed-shop theory—do they simply reflect the influence of one country's cinema on another? It would be a less important question if fashion were not so merciless. The cinema of the moment is increasingly political, and at Edinburgh the few films not concerned primarily with Revolution or the Generation Conflict seemed—in unfair contrast—slightly provincial (the Dutch *Mira*) or over-traditional (Yutkevitch's sensitive *Lika—Chekhov's Love*), unless they were clearly labelled 'comedy'. Are such films out of touch, or merely out of fashion?

Peter Watkins was, dependably, in the centre of the controversy area, though it's doubtless unfair to level the charge of fashion at him. **Punishment Park**, his new film, flourishes the familiar insignia of sincerity—hand-held camera, improvisation, impromptu violence. But, as with *Privilege* and *The Peace Game*, Watkins' newsreel realism seems misplaced and phoney in the context of a futuristic allegory. The film envisages an America in which those convicted of subversion or 'conspiracy to undermine the national security' are given the choice between prison (15 to 20 years) and 'Punishment Park', a four-day endur-

ance exercise in the desert under military supervision. Watkins cuts between two groups, one in the courtroom, one in the desert, building up a parallel momentum. But what should have worked as counterpoint comes over only as a kind of double hysteria, with even Watkins' ubiquitous interviewer finally losing his cool and screaming 'cut the camera' as the soldiers greet the survivors of the exercise with a barrage of gunfire. There's no doubting the force—or justice—of Watkins' indignation, but the strength of his early films lay in their precise charting of the movement to disaster: once the known geography of fact is taken away, one is indifferent to the fate of a political never-never land.

Making a virtue of political necessity, the modern masters of allegory are the Brazilian film-makers. If *Punishment Park* was the Festival's early talking-point, the two new films from Nelson Pereira dos Santos were the eye-openers of the second week. On the surface, *Lust for Love* is a familiar exercise in permutating relationships, centred on two couples living in idleness on an island off Rio. On a deeper level, it's an allegory of political attitudes that works as a reversal of Glauber Rocha: the blind (and here deaf and dumb) victim of revolt is not a colonel but an ex-activist, Alfredo, and the rebels are the adulterers, set on preserving their social insulation on the island. The film's climactic sequence is remarkable, cutting frenziedly between the exiled Alfredo, pacing a distant island with his guide-dog and his cuckold's Mao-quoting cast-off lover, and the adulterers laughing hysterically on the beach. It serves also as an apt preparation for dos Santos' next film.

In style, *A Very Lunatic Asylum* is a more expansive film—colour, large cast, ritual costumes, elaborate camerawork—and it opens out the political dialogue by picturing a whole town. The lunatic asylum set up by the town's new priest to treat the twin madness of political unrest (the poor) and insecurity (the rich) soon materialises into a microcosm of the town itself, intensifying its hierarchical tensions and fomenting a series of mini-coups. The result is a kind of Brazilian *Marat/Sade*; and although the dialogue, with its ritualised punctuation of pulsing strings and percussive crashes, is too dense to take in at one viewing (comprehension not quickened by French subtitles), the perpetual motion of dos Santos' camera clearly precludes any final resolution to the fluctuations of power or to the central ambiguity of the priest's character (catalyst or conciliator?).

Shown together on the same evening, Milos Forman's *Taking Off* and Krzysztof Zanussi's *Family Life* made an interesting pairing. Both depict the workings of revolt on the home front, the children's attempt to throw off the parental chains. Where Forman's film is a characteristic blend of gentle observation and impromptu farce, Zanussi's is densely wrought and almost theatrical in its reliance on dialogue and 'scenes' to propel the drama (the style is especially striking in contrast with Zanussi's muted first feature, *Structure of Crystals*). Summoned back to the bosom of a hated family after six years, Wit, a young design engineer, finds nothing changed: alcoholic father, soured aunt-housekeeper and demented sister still bicker their lives away in a



Alain Cuny in 'Valparaiso Valparaiso'. Hellman's 'Two-Lane Blacktop'.

dilapidated country mansion. The tone is high Gothic, embodied not only in the decor but in the dialogue ('The dog's deranged,' says the sister cheerfully to Wit's university friend, 'it's hereditary'). Its contrast with the aseptic quality of the modern world around them (the engineering office, the housing block at the bottom of the garden) forms the film's key antithesis, in parallel with that between the generations. *Family Life* is strongest at suggesting the repressed tensions that obstruct family love, and some of its scenes have almost the force of autobiography.

The generation theme was an inescapable one. Ulf von Mechow's *David and the Ice Age* sets its hippy hero on a hitchhiking odyssey across snowbound industrial Germany (the story's Goliath). The film is built up on a chain of picaresque encounters: the neo-Nazi business man who drags David along to his private orgy, a group of hippy-

ridiculing lorry-drivers, a little boy to whom David teaches his philosophy of aggression-through-play, a fellow hippy over-dependent on drugs. In the course of these meetings, David's passive saintliness is perhaps overstressed (especially when he wanders Christ-like into the rays of the sun while a voice sings 'A Child is Coming'); but the film's sense of humour and eye for surrealist detail (David coolly lighting his pipe in the corner of a truckful of snorting pigs) rescues it from the charge of didacticism.

Perhaps it was a light touch that was missing from most of the student films shown at the Festival. Those from the Royal College of Art (mostly 1969 vintage) were particularly disappointing, both in choice of material and in treatment. The most successful was Carlos Pasini's *Metamorphosis*—good performances and the hallucinatory quality of Kafka's story conveyed in serpentine camera movements and stark close-ups. The work sent by the London Film School was on the whole more interesting. Tony Sinden's *Size M* was an inventive and luridly coloured collage of horror images. *Sheila* (directed, scripted and edited by Jeffrey Schwartz) was a documentary about an Irish transvestite which managed to be both funny ('Why should the taxpayers have to pay for a tramp like me to have a sex change?') and sympathetic. Best of all, *Pigdom* (directed by Peter Blow, and edited—brilliantly—by Steve Martin) was a stomach-turning, propagandist documentary about the conditions in which pigs live, and are killed, to reach our dinner tables. Alternating between irony and indignation, and with an impressive command of statistics, the film suggested that its makers were totally committed to their subject rather than, as with some of their colleagues' work, performing a technical or stylistic exercise.

Of the other new feature films shown in the Festival, two at least deserve more than an Honourable Mention. Pascal Aubier's *Valparaiso Valparaiso* is a witty satire on the left-wing pretensions of a wealthy writer, Balthazar Lamarck-Caulaincourt (latest publication, 'L'Art, l'Amour et la Révolution'). It suffers from shooting down its target too early with some splendid dilettante-liberal dialogue in the opening scenes ('Pack a bare minimum—above all the violin!'). Once the hero is enlisted into a real revolution, the film degenerates into a more conventional surrealist romp.

In Monte Hellman's *Two-Lane Blacktop*, two young Americans tour the highways in a souped-up Chevrolet taking on racing bets from other drivers. Slow but mesmerically watchable, the film is a characteristic Hellman exercise in claustrophobia, never releasing its audience from the hermetic world of car, gas station, roadside café, until the pressure snaps in a stunning finish.

On one level *Two-Lane Blacktop* is a depersonalised *Easy Rider*, without the glib overlay of sermon and travelogue. Certainly Warren Oates plays Jack Nicholson to the younger men's Fonda and Hopper—a middle-aged camp follower of the youth movement—and most of the film's comedy lies in seeing the garrulous and self-confident older man outwitted at every turn by his taciturn juniors. On a deeper level, though, Hellman's film is a study in the process by which an enthusiasm becomes a



Dennis Hopper's *'The Last Movie'*

way of life, narrowing and concentrating the landscape of the mind until a kind of suffocation point is reached. In the closing sequence, as the young driver (James Taylor) awaits the starting signal for another race, he turns his eyes momentarily to the car window. As the camera zooms to follow his gaze into the horizon, it is as if the film's pressure chamber has been suddenly opened. The race begins, but the moving film decelerates until the last frame appears to stick and burn in the projector. The image is doubly effective, at once releasing the emotional tensions built up by the story, and lifting the film beyond the confines of simple representation.

NIGEL ANDREWS

VENICE

Venice nearly didn't happen this year, and halfway through the Festival the general consensus is perhaps that it would not have been greatly missed. Disappointment followed disappointment, and critics emerging from the Palazzo wore faces as inanimate as the plastic sculptures dotted round the foyer. They may be enlivened by the second week (SIGHT AND SOUND's press date falls inconveniently in the middle of the Festival), which offers films by Bergman (*The Touch*), Kluge (*Der grosse Verhaul*, an intriguing-sounding science fiction piece), Liliana Cavani, Jörn Donner, Harvey Hart, and at least the promise of unknown quantities from Poland, Russia and Czechoslovakia, not to mention a revolutionary ballet from China. But with too few exceptions Venice's first week has been glum indeed.

The mediocrities can perhaps be explained by the fact that the organising committee, faced with a dearth of films when the Festival seemed threatened, apparently invited just about everything they could lay their hands on. The previous administration's flirtation with overtly political cinema has been replaced by a rather tame compromise between 'popular' and 'minority' cinema. Even so, one expects more of Venice than a Mexican Western of stultifying banality, a greasy paella of clichés,

complete with twanging guitar score and much gory blood-letting. And one wouldn't travel that far to see Klaus Lemke's *Liebe so schön wie Liebe*, a vapid piece of self-indulgence which the director had the gall to describe as a homage to Fellini.

Equally self-indulgent, though in a very different class, was Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte*. Fassbinder manages to make about four films a year, and this one is by no means his best. It is set in a luxury Spanish hotel, where the international cast of a film in the making are waiting for their director to arrive. Fassbinder's camera probes, withdraws, circles round the characters, engendering an atmosphere of bored but apprehensive anticipation. The director's presence will be the catalyst which this circus of spongers needs to kick life into it. As the synopsis has it, 'The nervous tension assumes vampire aspects.' When the director (Lou Castel, in a performance touching on the maniacal) finally arrives, the volcano erupts, subsides, erupts again. Ranting and raving about missing equipment and finance, he merely exacerbates the others' public jealousies and private fantasies.

There follows a kind of emotional musical chairs as the director satisfies or frustrates the cannibalistic impulses of his cast and

crew. Eddie Constantine, who is to play an assassin in the film, spends most of the time impassive in a chair, radiating sultry menace from beneath his Borsalino hat; the others bitch, sulk, dissolve into hysterics; one man sits at a bar intermittently announcing his presence by tossing a glass over his shoulder. As previously, Fassbinder's style is bare, face-on, pared down to essentials. Alternating long takes of boredom with little cameos of temperament, he observes this self-enamoured, sorry group (himself included) with icy detachment, only towards the end allowing himself an interpolatory comment in a near 360 degree pan round the flotsam of the hotel bar. The effect is rather like that of a Warhol film: irritating, enervating, yet curiously and appealingly innocent in its view of material and emotional dependence.

Fassbinder's movie was generally disliked, perhaps because it needs closer attention than is possible in festival conditions. Looking round for something to enthuse about, some people plumped for an Iranian film called *The Cow*, which—maddeningly—I missed. The lure of the unexpected perhaps. Elsewhere expectations were seldom fully rewarded. Olmi's *Durante l'Estate*, for instance (discussed elsewhere in this issue), was rather less than one had hoped from advance reports. Olmi's portrait of a perkily nervous, gap-toothed cartographer who bustles round Milan seeking out aristocratic features in the faces of passers-by is lovingly observed. His doe-eyed professor is the sort of man who lets people into a lift before he gets out himself, and like so many bundles of nervous energy his defence against a hostile world is a blustering confidence in his private obsession—assigning a titular nobility to complete strangers. There is a touchingly funny and characteristically Olmi scene in which the little man escorts a girl who comes to sell him detergents round the shops near his flat in a fruitless attempt to change a 50,000 lire note. What seems to me uncharacteristic of Olmi, and a singular weakness in the film, is that the character verges on the pathetic, a figure of fun rather than a genuine eccentric.

There were similarly uncharacteristic touches in another disappointing film. Imagine a dream sequence set on a bleached-out beach where a man tied to a stake faces a

Satyajit Ray's *'Siddhartha and the City'*



firing squad—and the film keeps jumping into negative. Or a stomach-churning shock close-up of a nightmare guillotine in action; or a medical lecture on the mechanics of swallowing cut into a scene in which someone takes a migraine pill. The very last director to whom you would credit such overblown technique would be Satyajit Ray. In fact, Ray's **Siddhartha and the City** is bedevilled by technique, to the extent where it almost submerges those scenes where his old magic shines through.

This is *Mahanagar* revisited. Siddhartha is a medical student forced by his father's death to abandon his studies and look for a job. His sister already has a job and is doing rather well at it; his brother reads Guevara and chides him for his disillusionment with the revolutionary issues of the moment; Siddhartha himself is plagued by doubts and disappointments, spoils his chances at interviews, and is last seen leaving Calcutta to set up as a medical student in some distant provincial town. If it were possible to ignore the intrusion of an unbecoming style, the flash shots and the sweeping camera movements, this meditation on the growing pains of compromise would rank with Ray's previous biography of modern Calcutta. Siddhartha's relationship with a girl student, all tentative approaches and nervous misunderstandings, is conveyed almost entirely by nuances of dialogue and expression. There is vintage Ray, too, in a wordless scene, weirdly punctuated by the distorted echo of a microphone, in which Siddhartha and the girl look down from a skyscraper roof at the ant-like movements of a mass demonstration; and in an interview sequence, when seventy men wait in a stifling anteroom for their numbers to be called, and gradually work themselves into lodging a protest about the lack of ventilation.

The Italian press responded enthusiastically to Andrew Sinclair's version of **Under Milk Wood** (though Dylan Thomas in Italian...), less than enthusiastically to Michael Winner's **The Nightcomers**, a pointless reworking of the events leading up to *The Turn of the Screw* with Marlon Brando as an Irish Peter Quint: Jamesians beware. So far, Britain has also been represented by **The Devils**, which prompted the Vatican *L'Osservatore Romano* to thunder about 'an insult to the Church, to decency and to cinema.' France has no less than six films in the programme. As I write, Lelouch

and Albicocco have yet to unveil their versions of romantic cinema, but one of the French films, **M comme Mathieu**, was in its own quiet way a pleasant antidote to screaming nuns and sado-erotic sorcerers. A first film by Jean-François Adam, its unexceptional story of a paranoid whose terror of solitude creates in his mind a splintered vision of the woman he loves, was quietly told and shot in muted colours which described the barren landscape of a troubled mind in much the same way as *Le Samourai* charted the mind of a gangster through his immediate environment. The denouement, in which the man (played with a fine range of nervous tics by Sami Frey) fires a gun which appears to shatter a mirror and perhaps set his mind at rest, is a conventional tidying up. But along the way there are moments of delicately etched detail, enough to suggest that given a more adventurous subject Adam may have much to offer.

From Hungary, Pal Gabor's **Horizon**, a refreshingly unostentatious piece of social realism about a rebellious youth who throws up his job and wanders aimlessly about seeking refuge from a society whose regulated conformism offends his sense of spontaneity. The touchstone of his rebellion is no less than *If...*, which he sees several times; and if he doesn't aspire to the martyrdom of that film's rebels, he finds at least a temporary release in work (he spends a day carting fruit round a market) that rewards him with something more than the promise of a tea-break in an office full of robots. Too many conventional images of youth in limbo (cavorting in a field with his girl friend, breaking up the furniture in an office). But something emerged of the motivation for his actions, even if the end suggested that like a good son of the new Hungary he might eventually turn into a model of respectability.

More adventurous political self-analysis came from Spain in Carlos Duran's **Liberxina 90**, about an underground revolutionary group's attempt to sabotage the manufacture of a chemical substance of awesome potential. More adventurous at least until one realised that the setting wasn't Spain but some anonymously functional city apparently peopled only by agents of some unnamed repressive state. Bugged down by arguments about the respective merits of evolutionary Marxism and spontaneous revolutionary action, the film picked up a

little with the actual raid on the chemical plant. But its chic surface and flashy style was singularly inappropriate to its theme; a point devastatingly made by the end credit acknowledgments to sundry paragons of capitalist enterprise.

I should mention the excellent retrospectives (the French Primitives, and Max Reinhardt and the early German cinema), but the final word must go to Dennis Hopper's long-awaited **The Last Movie**, reportedly much abused on its home ground and shown here to reactions ranging from unqualified praise to outright contempt. It is indeed a mess, even more scrambled in content and execution than *Easy Rider*, but it does have the kind of felt conviction I missed in Hopper's earlier film. Sam Fuller is making a film debunking the lilywhite legend of Billy the Kid. We watch him shooting, confederate hat and all, on location in Peru. The production wrapped up, he thanks the crew and heads for Hollywood. Hopper, playing a wrangler with the unit, decides to stay on, an American innocent in an un-American setting. Innocence is soon eroded, both his own (his animal pleasure in the unspoilt landscape is soon corrupted into a dream of a luxury mountain-top hotel) and that of the Peruvian villagers, who are seen re-enacting the Fuller movie with home-made equipment and a passion for realism (the news that movies are faked cuts no ice with them), which involves Hopper in what almost becomes a ritual crucifixion, complete with vacillating priest.

Hopper's method is rambling, his ideas undigested, regurgitated in clumsy symbolism (the girl pines for a mink coat and a refrigerator, the wrangler's friend lusts for gold), his style too elaborately brooding to allow his meaning to emerge with anything like clarity—at least on a first viewing. Nevertheless, there is here a directness—raw, inarticulate perhaps, but felt in the gut—which gives the film a considerable force, urgently communicated. The multi-level dabbings in the reality/fantasy inversion towards the end, with Hopper caught up in the 'film' within the film and then abruptly assuming his actor's persona, don't really come off as anything more than a drug-clouded experiment in mutual perspectives. Up to that point, though, there is more than meets the eye. It will be an experience worth revisiting.

DAVID WILSON

Le Chagrin et La Pitié

from page 182

declare: 'Laval may have been wrong, but in an effort to defend him, I shall do no more than describe to you the last moments of his life. It's five in the morning. They wake him up to inform him that he is going to be shot. Ever since his interview with Hitler in Paris, Laval has carried a cyanide capsule. If the meeting had proved negative, he had decided to commit suicide rather than yield to Hitler's pressures. He didn't need to use it then. But he has kept the cyanide pill ever since. The moment they inform him that he is to be shot, he poisons himself. With official authorisation they use a stomach pump, bring him round (although

clinically, he was already dead) and take him outside to the execution yard. Since he can no longer stand, they tie him to a chair and they shoot him... Laval's overriding idea was anti-bolshevism. Perhaps he was wrong. History will tell us that fifty years from now...' If I had been René de Chambrun, that's how I would have spoken of Laval.

Yes, I would have been very interested in making a film like *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, but don't ask me what I would have done in Marcel Ophüls' place. One can always criticise everything. But I have no intention of doing so, because I find the tone of the film remarkable. And besides, the fact of explaining to the French over four and a half hours that they were not all of them heroes is in itself a bold undertaking.

At the beginning of the film Marcel Verdier says, 'Personally, I had two feelings: grief and pity.' Grief, of course. But pity only came much later. Pity for the collaborators who were tortured, for the women whose heads were shaved, and so on. But the first feeling we experienced was *shame*. I can still remember the sheer explosion of joy amongst all the soldiers when it was announced that Pétain had asked for an armistice. At that moment I was at the railway station in Clermont-Ferrand with a fellow soldier from whom I had a letter only today—that's quite a coincidence! Sitting on that station platform, in the middle of this disbanding army that was bursting with joy, there were only two idiots who were crying: me and my friend.

Grief, of course. But above all, Shame. ■

I don't know if other directors collect locations which inspire them and then discover ways to put them to use later on. Probably so—it seems such a natural thing to do, like keeping track, for future use, of certain interesting, not very well known actors. Before reading *The Householder*, I'd already found the doll's house rooms overlooking a mosque in Delhi the young couple in that film would occupy; years of staying at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay and of admiring its wonderful main staircase convinced me of the need to make a film there in which some heroine of mine would be forever rushing down those iron-scrolled steps to encounter Mother India at the bottom.

Discovering Beechwood House, a neo-Georgian mansion in Scarborough, New York, last autumn, quite accidentally, was also stumbling upon a film, but I couldn't have said then what sort of a film it would be. A Hudson River *Last Year at Marienbad*, or a nostalgic Thirties story with faraway music, or something to do with upper-class decay? Any one of these suited Beechwood, which is vast and white, with two tall classical porches standing improbably side by side,

one dating from right after the Revolutionary War, the other from the 1880s, when the original house was expanded. To walk through the series of ever-grander rooms strung out in a line starting at the rather poky 18th-century core is to receive something of a lesson in American domestic architecture over the years. But it is more of a lesson on a society which has now completely disappeared. The heyday of Beechwood House was from the Nineties until

the American depression. It is exactly the kind of place F. Scott Fitzgerald went to big parties in and wrote about. He would have understood the mentality of the family which created it: energetic Midwesterners named Vanderlip who made a lot of money out of the railroads and who wanted to put on a bit of a show.

Today, with its somewhat derelict look, it has the air of a fashionable, run-down Westchester asylum—good material for another American writer, John Cheever, who in fact once lived in a cottage on the grounds. The fate of most of these big old houses when they lack historical associations and aren't architecturally 'significant' is either to be pulled down and the land renamed something like 'Astor Acres' and developed—dedicated to Yesterday's Charm and Tomorrow's Convenience—or to be turned into academic hotels. In the meantime, they become film locations. Just down Route 9 on the way to Tarrytown is the house of the late Anna Gould, Duchesse de Talleyrand, where *Dark Shadows*, a horror film based on a television series, was being made for M-G-M while we were shooting *Savages*.

The idea for *Savages* sprang nearly fully formed out of a conversation in March with George Trow, a young staff writer from the *New Yorker* with whom I have been collaborating and who had also been impressed by seeing Beechwood House. He brought in another writer, Michael O'Donoghue, who liked the idea we'd had for using the place. *Savages* is one of those projects which starts out as '... Wouldn't it be fun if ...' but usually never gets carried forward because, well, making films isn't after all supposed to be *fun*, but something serious, what with all that *money* at stake, and one's *reputation* to think of, etc. However, in this case we did go forward, thanks to the enthusiasm of Ismail Merchant and to that of Joseph Saleh and Jerry Kay, partners in DIA Films, who also backed *Bombay Talkie*. Walter Lassally agreed to photograph the film and we began shooting in May, with a non-union crew, after only eight weeks preparation, which included writing the screenplay and the making of elaborate costumes designed by Anthony Korner. We shot the film in a little less than six weeks.

This is the story: a band of primitives, living in an unspecified forest somewhere, masked, naked, covered in clay, is disturbed in the midst of a human sacrifice by the sudden appearance of a croquet ball. This object seems to have a mysterious potency, and the savages, led by their high priestess who appropriates it, begin a trek through the forest in search of the ball's origins. In time they arrive at deserted Beechwood, which they enter cautiously and explore. They decide to camp there. Now the house and its contents begin to have a civilising effect on the savages. Their individual personalities emerge, and with them, pasts, futures, family connections, ambitions. Each one of the savages is a kind of eternal type: a priestess-matriarch, who becomes a society hostess conducting her salon; the tribal man-of-action who turns into a magnate; a muttering tribal ancient who

SAVAGES

James Ivory



Savage into maid: Asha Putli standing beneath a portrait of one of the Vanderlip family



The tribe surrounds a 1930 Pierce Arrow outside Beechwood House

becomes an ambassador and is knighted, etc. And then there are the victims: a 'limping man' of moral perceptions but without any vigour; an artist-entertainer who is eternally courted and dismissed; the woman of goodness and beauty who is not robust enough to survive the tribe's long march. Very soon the savages become grand ladies and gentlemen, in fine clothes, and are giving dinner parties, at which they worry about seating precedence, discuss world politics (it seems to be 1913 or again 1933, we don't know), embark on liaisons.

But now, the force or wave that swept them towards and into the house seems to be pulling them away from it. Unseen, the croquet ball, which had become a sacred object earlier on, rolls past the banquet table and out into the night. At once, things start falling apart. Manners go, relationships disintegrate, the 'good' or noble characters isolate themselves. By stages, faster for some than for others, a decline sets in, and the savages revert to what they'd been originally. At dawn, for their whole rise and fall has taken only one day, in a burst of renewed energy—their decadence seems to have enervated them—the tribesmen go back into the woods during a manic croquet game, in which they drive their balls into the trees. The house is deserted once more and the sun comes up.

The attitudes of the actors on being told this story during casting (there was no script for them to read until five days into the film) seemed to be conditioned by their ages. The younger ones would say admiringly, 'Far out!' and the older ones would shake

their heads and tell me, 'I don't know what it means, darling, but I trust you.' God knows it must have sounded very strange, and God knows too what the experts on primitive man and the moralists and the anthropologists will say. I'm sure the whole thing must be very full of holes. Though the footage isn't edited, I do think the finished film will be entertaining. It's no great heavy thing for sure, and it may turn out that this particular version of *Man's Saga* will be a comedy.

Just as India by virtue of its overwhelming presence was a character—in fact, a central character—of both *Shakespeare Wallah* and *The Guru*, Beechwood House similarly imposed itself on everything, from the actual scene-by-scene construction of the film to the choice of costumes and props. The rooms of the house, like those of many American millionaires, were decorated in different styles—pseudo Renaissance, pseudo Adam, French 18th-century, Japanese. The episodes which were set in these rooms corresponded to a time in the savages' 'history' and tended to be used only once, except for the rooms of passage—stairs, hallways, etc., which appear again and again.

Though much picked over by members of the Vanderlip family, the furniture, objects, pictures, etc. were largely intact, and closets and attics were full of the clothes and possessions of several generations. All of this was at our disposal, including an extraordinary collection of Chinese robes which came in handy when the savages reach the stage of degeneracy in which they go in for exotic

hokum and dope-taking. The house was a kind of time capsule, sealed at the end of the Thirties by the Second World War, when the Vanderlip men went into the services and the staff left—one imagines—for the war plants. Nothing was ever changed after that, and so we put our savages into the clothes of that decade, which also removed them from a too-familiar present with its own associations.

Strangely, the actual shooting of the film became a kind of *coup de grâce* to whatever remained of the spirit of the house, for the requirements of our work were to disturb forever what was still intact of a family nature. We entered rooms which had been sealed up for a decade or more and which were still pervaded powerfully by the presence of the men and women who had once lived in them—people, moreover, who had very carefully guarded the mementoes of a lifetime: heaps of letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, pressed corsages, locks of baby hair, lists of debutantes, old cheque books. Who were to care for these treasures now? In fact, the last member of the Vanderlip family to live at Beechwood, a grandson of the man who enlarged it so splendidly, gave up camping there with his wife and dogs while we were shooting and went to live for good in another house near by. Once he had gone the house became—and quite obviously—just a shell; we felt the woods could so easily move in on it, that vines would creep over the window sills, and the ghost of a murderer said to lurk in the place would really move in and roam about dragging his shackles.



The end of 'The Searchers': 'the door closing on the wilderness'

PRISONER OF THE DESERT

Joseph McBride and Michael Wilmington

There is a strange irony involved in John Ford's visual metaphors for Ireland, the land of his ancestors, and for the American West, the land of his dreams. The rocky, starved soil which so many fled is seen as a lush, green, endlessly fertile valley, and the American Dream to which they fled is a desert valley slashed intermittently by rivers which serve only to emphasise its essential aridity. Yet the America of Ford's stories is presumably a land of fertility and opportunity, or why did the immigrants leave in the first place? The Irish characters of *The Quiet Man* and *The Rising of the Moon* (one of whom actually lives in a national monument) are hemmed in on all sides by centuries-old traditions to which they must accommodate themselves. But in primitive America, every man is his own master. The pioneers are thrown into a testing ground whose only landmarks are the million-year-old rocks of Monument Valley, the vast expanse of land on the Navajo Reservation which Ford first used as a location in *Stagecoach*. D.H. Lawrence could have been describing Monument Valley when he wrote, 'White men have probably never felt so bitter anywhere, as here in America, where the very landscape, in its very beauty, seems a bit devilish and grinning, opposed to us.' Yet Ford, perversely, considers Monument Valley 'the most complete, beautiful, and peaceful place on earth.'

A reviewer of *The Searchers*, attempting to demonstrate Ford's abuse of 'realism', observed that the story ranges all over the West, up into Canada, and down into Mexico, but the players never seem to

leave Monument Valley. Precisely. Monument Valley is more than a real place to Ford. It is a state of mind. Its beauty is reminiscent of the decadent poets' theories about the aesthetics of uselessness, for it is

both a dead end and an ultimate value, the perfect setting for the *acte gratuit*. Its weird, gargantuan panoramas resemble nothing so much as an extra-terrestrial landscape; indeed, Stanley Kubrick used it in the star-gate section of *2001*. Monument Valley is a moral battleground, stripped down and rendered more perfect by the absence of organic life within its boundaries. It is both primeval and beyond society. In Ford's 'dream' Ireland, a man returns to his past. In the American Dream, his every move reverberates into the future. The horizons of Monument Valley point toward eternity.

The Searchers has that clear yet intangible quality which characterises an artist's masterpiece—the sense that he has gone beyond his customary limits, submitted his deepest tenets to the test, and dared to exceed even what we might have expected of him. Its hero, Ethan Edwards (John Wayne), is a volatile synthesis of all the paradoxes which Ford had been finding in his Western hero since *Stagecoach*. A nomad tortured by his desire for a home. An outlaw and a military hero. A cavalier and a cut-throat. Ethan embarks on a five-year odyssey across the frontier after his brother's family is murdered and his niece taken captive by the Comanches. Like Homer's Ulysses, he journeys through a perilous and

bewitching landscape. Even more than in Ford's earlier Westerns, the land is felt as a living, governing presence. Previously the great rocks were a backdrop, omnipresent but glimpsed from a distance. Usually it is the Indians (the test) who move among the rocks in Ford's Westerns; the pioneers, vulnerable and exposed, move through the plains below. Here, however, much of the important action takes place up among the rocks, crevices and cliffs. There are many more high-angled shots than is usual in Ford. The epic detachment conveyed by the vast aerial views lends an almost supernatural aura to Ethan's quest which is denied to the more prosaic characters of the other Westerns. The demons which drive him onward, almost against his will, seem to emanate from the 'devilish and grinning' land. The killing of the family, an action horrifyingly abrupt, brutal, and gratuitous, is only the first in a long chain of bizarre events which bedevil Ethan and, finally, drive him mad. Within the classical symmetry of the story—the film begins with a door opening on Ethan riding in from the desert and ends with the door closing on him as he returns to the desert—Ford follows a subjective thread.

The Searchers has had a curious critical history. It was largely misunderstood and underrated at the time of its release in 1956; apparently the only serious contemporary critique was the SIGHT AND SOUND review by Lindsay Anderson, who was amazed to find that Ethan was 'an unmistakable neurotic', and asked, 'Now what is Ford, of all directors, to do with a hero like this?' Anderson's *Sequence* articles on *They Were Expendable* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* were the pioneering work in Ford criticism, and his disillusionment with Ford after *The Searchers* was prophetic of the line which the English-speaking critical establishment has only recently begun to reconsider. Odd as Anderson's incomprehension may seem today, we must remember that we are looking at the film with full knowledge of the sombre cast Ford's vision took in such late works as *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and *Seven Women*.

The Searchers did violence to that 'simple, sure, affirmative' heroic vision which seemed (and, indeed, still seems to many critics) to be Ford's *raison d'être*. Even *Cahiers du Cinéma* gave the film a scant three-line notice; by 1962 its stature had so increased in retrospect that it placed at the top of a *Cahiers* critics' poll on the greatest American sound films. Fordian scholars Peter Bogdanovich and Andrew Sarris also rate it among the best of Ford's work (Bogdanovich's new film *Directed by John Ford* begins and ends with the beginning and ending of *The Searchers*), compensating for the derogatory remarks made about it in critical studies of the director by Jean Mitry and Philippe Haudiquet, who agree with Anderson that *le vrai* Ford ended in the mid-Fifties and what followed is mostly 'self-parody'. But *The Searchers* is still so scandalously unknown in the United States that Jean-Luc Godard's tribute in *Weekend* passed over the head of the Grove Press subtitler, who thought that *La Prisonnière du Désert* was the French title for something called *Prisoner of the Desert*.

The film is not in fact an aberration, but a crystallisation of the fears, obsessions and

contradictions which had been boiling up under the surface of Ford's work since his return from World War II. Godard hints at this in his delightful comment: 'Mystery and fascination of this American cinema... How can I hate John Wayne upholding Goldwater and yet love him tenderly when abruptly he takes Natalie Wood into his arms in the last reel of *The Searchers*?' Ethan is both hero and anti-hero, a man radically estranged from his society and yet driven to act in its name. His strengths and failings, like the promise and danger of the land around him, are inextricable. *The Searchers* is, on the surface, a highly romantic subject—a knightly quest—but the knight's motives are impure, and as the search progresses, Ford begins to undercut his morality. There is no Penelope to mark the end of his quest, because the woman he loves is his brother's wife and she has been killed at the outset, an event which makes his peregrinations absurd. Ethan starts out seeking the return of his nieces, Debbie and Lucy, but after he finds Lucy's mutilated corpse and realises that Debbie is being made into an Indian squaw, he becomes nihilistic, seeking only revenge. When he finally catches up with Debbie, he tries to kill her. And the search itself would have been a failure had not Old Mose Harper (a Shakespearean fool played by Hank Worden) accidentally found Debbie after Ethan had spent years losing her trail. Ethan loses her again, and Mose finds her again.

It is this grotesquerie, and the anarchic humour that accompanies it, which the contemporary reviewers found incomprehensible. But Ford's sense of humour is one of his strongest trumps. In his greatest works, the plot line oscillates freely between the tragic and the ridiculous, with the comic elements providing a continuous commentary on the meaning of the drama. The comedy, broad and idiosyncratic and self-conscious as it may seem, is the rough prose to the exalted visual verse. Just as Ford's few actual comedies have had notably grim undertones (such as *The Quiet Man*, which is about the romantic fantasies of a guilt-ridden boxer), his tragedies always have undertones of giddiness. The critic who finds the situations of *The Searchers* or *Seven Women* ridiculous is ignoring or choosing to ignore the fact that Ford finds the situations ridiculous as well. His view of drama embraces the conviction that what is most noble, most poignant and most terrifying in life is frequently a hair's breadth away from howling absurdity. What makes films such as *The Searchers* and *Seven Women* great is the striking manner in which they reconcile the noble with the absurd, the way in which their seemingly straightforward situations are shaped to encompass the maddest perversities and still retain a sense of order. When Ford fails, his sense of humour is usually the first casualty.

The first images of *The Searchers* are the invocation of a myth. A door opens inside the darkness of a pioneer cabin, a woman appears, and the camera glides behind her through the door and outside to reveal Ethan, a tiny moving form, gradually materialising on horseback out of the morning mist surrounding one of the great rocks. Ethan rides slowly, silently, inexorably toward the little homestead, Ford cutting

again and again from him to the waiting family; the intercutting gives a feeling of magnetic attraction. When Ethan dismounts and shakes hands wordlessly with his brother, his face is mysteriously shadowed by the turned-down brim of his battered hat. The ostentatious way he wears his sword and his fading Confederate cloak alerts us to his futile absorption in the events of the past. As Ethan goes to kiss his brother's wife, Ford gives us, for the first time, a full shot of the home, harmonious with the landscape. The home is a shrine of civilisation in the wilderness, a shrine almost as ridiculous as it is sacred, for we see only one other pioneer home in the entire film. The communal impulse around which the generative principles of Ford's universe are organised is centred precariously around these tiny dwellings. The two pioneer families are infinitely precious and infinitely vulnerable.

Ethan is a descendant of Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking, whose character, according to Henry Nash Smith in his classic study of the Western myth, *Virgin Land*, is based on a 'theoretical hostility to civilisation'. Ford is usually considered a conservative, but despite his nostalgia for traditional values, the term is somewhat misleading. Like Cooper, he is impatient with the artificial harmony of organised society, as his fascination with the West and with all varieties of nomads, outlaws, outcasts and warriors makes abundantly clear. There is a strong streak of anarchy in his Irish temperament. His characters are typically refugees from constricting societies (Europe, urbanised America) in which once-vital traditions have hardened into inflexible dogmas. The traditions he celebrates are the tribal traditions of honour, justice and fidelity, and all of these come together in the image of the family, the purest form of society.

Ford's heroes, whether they are outlaws (Harry Carey in his early silents, the bandits in *Three Bad Men* and *Three Godfathers*, Ringo in *Stagecoach*) or lawmen (Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine*, the soldiers in the Cavalry films), all have a primitive awe for the family. (This, to Ford, is beyond

Dorothy Jordan and John Wayne



reason. When a French interviewer asked why the 'theme of family' is so important in his work, he replied, 'You have a mother, don't you?' Some of these men seek revenge for the murder of members of their own families; others sacrifice themselves for orphans; the cavalymen act to keep the plains secure for the pioneer homesteads. All, to some degree, are also loners and outcasts: their role as the defender of primitive society forces them to live in the wilderness with its enemies, the Indians. But of all Ford's Western heroes, only Ethan turns his violence *against* his family—against Debbie, who could just as well be his own daughter—and that is what makes him such a profound and unsettling figure.*

As the search progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to appreciate the difference between Ethan's heroism and the villainy of Scar, his Indian nemesis. Ethan hates Indians—is he envious of their freedom? Certainly Scar and Ethan are the only characters who fully understand each other, because their motives are so similar. We learn eventually that the massacre, which seemed at first totally wilful, was performed in revenge for the death of Scar's own children. 'Two sons killed by white men,' he tells Ethan. 'For each son, I take many scalps.' The pattern of primitive revenge is endless; Ethan will eventually take Scar's scalp. (And as an added fillip, Scar does not know the word for scalp, and has to be supplied with it—scalping was the white man's invention.) There is a very strange scene early in the pursuit when Ethan shoots out the eyes of an Indian corpse so that, according to Comanche belief, the dead man will never enter the spirit-land and will have to 'wander forever between the winds'. Seemingly a blind act of vindictiveness—or a gesture of contempt toward an alien culture—the act in fact has undertones of kinship. Ethan himself is doomed to wander forever between the winds. He takes on the nature of a primitive in desperate recognition of his own failure to find a place in civilised society. Since the Civil War ended, he has been fighting in Mexico and, apparently, robbing banks; he has developed a seemingly limitless knowledge of Indian tricks, customs and language.

What lures him out of the wilderness is a home impulse—his love for Martha—but it is also an anarchic impulse, for his presence threatens the stability of the family. Ethan's attachment to his sister-in-law is futile, and any overt action would be unthinkable, the shattering of a taboo. Martha shares his feelings—it is she who opens the door on the wilderness—and she inadvertently speaks them to the Rev. Samuel Johnson Clayton (Ward Bond) on the morning of the massacre. When the communal breakfast is finished, Clayton, alone now, stands up to drink a last cup of coffee. His eyes wander, and he sees Martha through the doorway of her bedroom, caressing Ethan's cloak. He slowly turns back, staring straight ahead and sloshing the coffee reflectively in his cup, as Ethan enters behind him to accept the cloak and kiss

Martha goodbye. As Sarris puts it, 'Nothing on earth would ever force this man to reveal what he had seen.' When the massacre occurs (the very day after Ethan's arrival), it has the disturbing feeling of an acting-out of his suppressed desires—destruction of the family and sexual violation of Martha. With the links between Scar and Ethan in mind, it becomes easy to see why Ford, much to the consternation of certain critics, cast a white man in the Indian role. Scar is not so much a character as a crazy mirror of Ethan's desires.

The Searchers stands midway between the 'classical' or psychologically primitive Western and what could be called the 'neo-classical' Western (more commonly, if rather crudely, known as the 'psychological' Western). It was not, of course, the first Western to criticise the basic assumption of the genre—that the solitude of the hero, because it is an instinctive revulsion against the hypocrisy of civilised society, is *a priori* a good thing. In the decade before *The Searchers* appeared, a whole rash of Westerns were made in which the hero's solitude was presented as socially unjust (*High Noon*), wasteful (*The Gunfighter*), callous (*The Naked Spur*), insane (*Red River*), or impossibly pure (*Shane*). Little as Ford is usually influenced by film trends, he could hardly have escaped coming to terms with the radical questions posed by this departure. Shortly before he began shooting *The Searchers*, Ford described it as 'a kind of psychological epic'. The terms are contradictory, certainly, but contradictions are what the film is about.

Its debt to *Shane*, the apotheosis of Western epic romanticism, is clear (particularly in *Shane's* wordless flirtation with Mrs. Starrett), but the influence of Howard Hawks' *Red River* is far more important. Tom Dunson was the first anti-hero John Wayne had ever played. In his films with Ford before *Red River*, the director had stressed his gentleness, his simplicity, the quiet authority beneath his rough exterior. After *Red River*, however, Ford began to use Wayne in parts which were more psychologically complex: the ageing cavalry captain in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, the neurotic captain in *Rio Grande*, the pacifist boxer in *The Quiet Man*. This change in Ford's view of Wayne was evidently no coincidence. Discussing Ford recently, Wayne said, 'I don't think he ever really had any kind of respect for me as an actor until I made *Red River* . . . Even then, I was never quite sure.'

Wayne's most powerful quality as an actor is his mysteriousness. The audience is never quite sure what he is going to do next, and every shift in mood is a revelation of something which, at the end of the film, will still remain partly inexplicable. Dunson, like Ethan, is a good and noble man soured by a tragic mistake. It is a strong performance, but what makes his Ethan so marvellous is the way that Ford, instead of keeping the character's innate gentleness buried, lets it break through the sullen façade in flashes of sudden sentiment and humour. Besides the character influence, the two films are remarkably similar in plot: both begin with a woman being killed by Indians because the man she loves has deserted her, both have the man rescue a boy—in *The Searchers*, the



Pat Wayne and Ward Bond

half-breed Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter), his brother's ward—and embark with him on an obsessive epic task, both transfer our allegiance to the boy when the man becomes deranged, and both end with a showdown in which the man is unable to kill his kin—in Dunson's case, his ward Matthew, and in Ethan's, Debbie. And there are more localised connections: Dunson's bracelet which the Indian takes from Fen becomes Ethan's medal which Scar takes from Debbie; Dunson's cold-blooded murder of the 'quitters' is echoed in Ethan's ambush of Futterman and his men, an action unprecedented for a Ford hero; and Hank Worden's performance as a barmy trailhand won him a place in Ford's stock company and foreshadowed the Mose Harper character.†

What this elaborate pattern of borrowings indicates is not so much that Ford was constructing an answer to Hawks' film (some of these elements are also present in the crude novel by Alan LeMay from which Ford and Frank Nugent adapted the script for *The Searchers*), but that the 'anti-Westerns', particularly *Red River*, jarred Ford into a new area of thinking by suggesting an alternative course for the working-out of the hero's impulses. In the classic *Stagecoach* and *My Darling Clementine*, Ford seemed to be endorsing an uneasy equation between force and morality by portraying revenge as socially beneficial and morally pure. The revenge transformed the community by cleansing it of its internal pressures—which were also the hero's pressures—and it won the hero the community's respect because he had done a necessary deed of which they, because of their civilised stultification, were incapable. When Ringo and Wyatt Earp take leave of Lordsburg and Tombstone at the end, it is of their own volition. Though they are still men of the wilderness, their desires and ideals are close to those of civilised men.

Now what is Ford, of all directors, to do with a hero like Ethan? *Red River* may have a parallel plot, but it is really about something altogether different, the maturing of the relationship between Dunson and Matthew. *The Searchers* is about Ethan's relationship to society, and the film's abruptly shifting moods and moral emphases

†With perhaps a borrowing from Worden's crazy Indian in Hawks' *The Big Sky* thrown in for good measure. One of the most astonishing visual *tours de force* in *The Searchers*, the procession of the horsemen between the parallel lines of Indians, is embryonically present in the scene in *The Big Sky* in which the Indians follow the keelboat along the river bank.

*Apparently the only comparable example in Ford's career is *Pilgrimage* (1933), which deals with a possessive mother who sends her son to his death in World War I rather than lose him to the girl he loves—one of his strangest and most moving works.

are determined by the imbalances in that relationship. Since Ethan, for instance, finds it impossible to enter society through marriage, all the marriages the film portrays are, in varying degrees, grotesque. Either the female dominates the male (the Edwardses, the Jorgensons), or the female is held in literal bondage to the male (Scar and his wives) or the partners are wildly incongruous (Laurie Jorgenson and the goonish cowboy she turns to in Martin's absence; Martin and Look, the chubby Indian wife he inadvertently buys at a trading post). Fundamentally alone though Ethan is, all of his dilemmas are shared by the community around him. When Brad Jorgenson learns, as Ethan did, that his lover (Lucy Edwards) has been raped and killed, he rushes madly off to be slain by the Indians, who are lurking in the darkness like the unseen, ungovernable forces of the libido. Martin, who is more restrained and civilised than Ethan, nevertheless resembles Ethan enough to suggest that his continual fleeing into the wilderness, away from Laurie's advances, holds a clue to what drove Ethan and Martha apart in the first place: a fundamental reluctance to become domesticated. Just as Laurie turns to the dull, dependable cowboy in despair of taming Martin, so it must have been that Martha turned to Ethan's dull brother for stability.

Even after Martin becomes, in effect, the hero by attempting to restrain Ethan's nihilism, he is merely following the principles with which the search began. And despite Martin's actions, it is finally Ethan who makes the decision about whether to kill Debbie or bring her home. Gestures against Ethan tend to remain only gestures; minor characters are continually frustrated in their attempts to change his course. Toward the end, Martin draws a knife on Ethan, but throws it down when he remains immobile. Martin cries, 'I hope you die!' and Ethan responds with his characteristic assertion of invulnerability: 'That'll be the day.'

The one white character who is able to give Ethan pause is Clayton, who keeps his schizoid roles of minister and Texas Ranger in a subtle, if disturbing, balance: shouting 'Hallelujah!' when he gets off a good rifle shot and snapping 'Bible!' as if calling for a gun. Ward Bond is the authority figure in Ford's stock company—he is the one who explodes with joy and climbs up the pole during the climactic running-up of the American flag in *Drums Along the Mohawk*—and he often seems to be the spokesman for Ford's own ambiguous outlook. (In *The Wings of Eagles*, made the year after *The Searchers*, he literally becomes the director, playing 'John Dodge', the gruff maker of Westerns and sea stories.) It is a clue to Ford's outlook that Bond's three fullest roles—*Wagonmaster*, *The Quiet Man* and *The Searchers*—all have him playing clerics who are also secular leaders, and even, in the latter two cases, warriors (in *The Quiet Man* he is involved in an I.R.A. cell). Because both roles are necessary for the survival of a primitive community, the Bond character is able to sacrifice the purity of one to satisfy the demands of the other. The most pragmatic of Ford's characters, he is a representative of the civilised order who has won his position by restraining an innate primitivism. He averts his eyes on witness-

sing Martha's infidelity—just as his priest in *The Quiet Man* lies to save a marriage—in acknowledgment of the tissue of discreet lies and tactful evasions which enables a struggling society to stabilise itself.

The difference between Clayton and Ethan is succinctly expressed in their first meeting since the end of the war, when Clayton asks Ethan why he didn't show up for the surrender. 'I don't believe in surrenders,' says Ethan, adding sarcastically, 'No—I still got my sabre, Reverend. Didn't turn it into no ploughshare, neither.' Ethan, the eternal rebel, carries his rebellion to the point of madness. Clayton compromises, and this is what makes him a leader. The two men are several times seen tossing things back and forth—a canteen, a coin, a gun—in wary gestures of mutual forbearance. Although they never come to blows, they are close to it several times. What holds Ethan back is the same fundamental indecision which holds him back from Scar. To make a decisive move against either one would imply a commitment to either civilisation or primitivism, and Ethan's dilemma is that he can't make the choice. When he finally meets up with Scar, it is the ultimate expression of John Wayne *macho*—he stands literally inches from Scar's face and growls insults at both his body ('Scar, eh? Plain to see how ya got your name') and his soul ('You speak pretty good American—for a Comanch'—someone teach ya?'). Scar is equal to the *macho* ('You speak good Comanch'—someone teach you?') but he is similarly unable to make the decisive physical move.

When Scar dies, it is Martin, the half-breed, who kills him. In transferring the actual heroic deeds, the killing of Scar and the finding of Debbie, to Martin and to Mose, the fool, Ford is destroying the myth of the heroic loner. If Ethan's search is motivated by a desire to preserve the community, then the community, even against its will, must participate in the action. It would never have taken place if the outsider

had not initiated it, but it is fundamentally a communal action. If the pragmatists (Clayton, the Jorgensons, Martha) are needed to stabilise society, the visionaries (Ethan, Martin, Mose) are needed to motivate it and define its goals. All, whether they realise it or not, are part of society, a fact which Ford visually underscores with his repeated shots through the doorways of homes. But the film is, as Ford has said, the 'tragedy of a loner': Ethan must reject a society he can neither accept nor understand, and the society must reject him, since he belongs to neither the white nor the Indian world.

Martin belongs to both, which is why he is able to accept both Debbie's miscegenation with Scar and Laurie's desire for a home. Until the search is consummated, however, he is unable to accept Laurie and civilisation, for her perspective is just as distorted as Ethan's. Resplendent in the virginal white of her wedding dress, she urges that Ethan be allowed to kill Debbie because 'Martha would want him to'. Martin has told Laurie that Ethan is 'a man that can go crazy-wild, and I intend to be there to stop him in case he does,' but it is chillingly clear that Ethan's craziness is only quantitatively different from that of civilisation in general.

Even the United States Cavalry, which Ford had eulogised in his 1940s Westerns, have by-passed their role as truce-keepers and become vindictive white supremacists. (It was around this time that Ford first commissioned a screenplay for *Cheyenne Autumn*.) Immediately after Ethan begins slaughtering buffalo so that the Indians will starve, a cavalry bugle merges with his gunshots. Ford gives the cavalry his traditional romantic trappings—jaunty marching lines, 'Garry Owen' on the soundtrack—but he undercuts their romanticism, as he does Ethan's. The cavalry has frozen into an inflexible role: they make their entrance against a background of snow; they gallop through a river whose natural current has

Confrontation in the desert: John Wayne and Jeffrey Hunter



turned to ice; and—pre-dating *Little Big Man* by fourteen years—we are taken into an Indian village whose inhabitants they have massacred. Like Scar and Ethan, the cavalrymen have been trapped in a social tragedy whose terms have been established long before their arrival. The innocent Indians they slaughter, like the family slaughtered by Scar, have become pathetic pawns in a cycle of retribution which will end only when one race exterminates the other. In this context, it is surely no accident that Mose Harper is both the craziest of all the characters and the one who has the most obsessive need for civilisation: all he talks about is being able to sit in a rocking chair. That is what he is doing when he arrives with Ethan at the burned-out home, and what he is doing at the end, when Debbie comes home.

Miscegenation, next to war itself, is probably the most dramatic form of collision between cultures, and by exploring a community's reaction to miscegenation, Ford is testing its degree of internal tension. The dark man, red or black, occupies a peculiar position in the American mythos: he is both a cultural bogey and a secretly worshipped talisman of the libidinous desires which the white man's culture takes pains to sublimate. The Western genre in both literature and film, which usually replaces the black man with the red man, is particularly expressive of the American psychical dilemma; Leslie Fiedler's celebrated thesis about American culture, which was received with scandalised disbelief at the time of its propagation, is rooted about equally in the writings of Cooper and the New England Puritans. (Ethan's name, which in the book was Amos Edwards, suggests a fusion between Ethan Allen and Jonathan Edwards—between the adventurer and Puritan impulses in the American personality.)

As Ford, starting with *The Sun Shines Bright* in 1953, began to probe deeper and deeper into the causes of social dissolution, racial conflict began to assume almost obsessive proportions in his stories, providing the dramatic centre of *The Searchers*, *Sergeant Rutledge*, *Two Rode Together*, *Cheyenne Autumn*, *Seven Women* and even the comic *Donovan's Reef*. LeMay's novel

lingers over the grisly details of the murders and rapes committed by the Indians on the frontier women. Ford's treatment of the massacre, by contrast, is marked by a devastating elision. The Gothic shot of Scar's shadow falling on Debbie in the graveyard and the fade-out on his blowing the horn are far more suggestive than an actual depiction of the massacre would have been. Our minds work much as Ethan's works when, in the next scene, he stares at the burning home with a fixed expression of horror. He is contemplating the unthinkable.

The emotion Ford emphasises in the moments before the massacre is the women's fear, conveyed through the camera's compulsive pull into a huge close-up of Lucy screaming (a very uncharacteristic shot for Ford and, as such, a doubly brutal shock) and through Martha's anxiety for Debbie. When Ethan, toward the middle of the film, finds a group of white women driven mad by their years among the Indians (one of them croons distractedly to a doll), he reacts with revulsion, and the camera pulls in to a large close-up of his face. He has become possessed by the same fear which possessed the women in the home. Eldridge Cleaver has given a cogent analysis of why this act above all is so inflammatory: 'In a society where there exists a racial caste system . . . the gulf between the Mind and the Body will seem to coincide with the gulf between the two races. At that point, the fear of biological miscegenation is transposed into social imagery . . . The social distinction is made sacred.' Therefore, as Cleaver puts it, 'rape is an insurrectionary act.' It is revealing that the arch-racist Ethan finds Martin's 'marriage' to Look, the Indian woman, amusing rather than frightening. It has nothing to do with white culture. If a white man impregnates a dark woman, he is planting his seed in an alien culture; but if a dark man impregnates a white woman he is, in the eyes of the primitive white, violating her. The scene in which Ethan finds the mad white women is so disturbing that the spectator may momentarily wonder whether Ford is not succumbing to the same fear of miscegenation and trying to convey it to us with the subjective camera movement toward Ethan. But our first glimpse of Debbie as a woman makes it clear that the

fear has a purely neurotic base. Like Martin, she has accepted her dual heritage; resigned to her role as Scar's wife ('These are my people'), she nevertheless remembers her childhood ('I remember . . . from always . . .'). Miscegenation has not destroyed her identity, but deepened it.

Ethan's climactic encounter with Debbie occurs in a rock cleft similar to the one in which, years before, he had found Lucy's body. He takes her roughly by the shoulders—their first physical contact in five years—and, in the same movement, suddenly swings her body into his arms. He says softly, 'Let's go home, Debbie.' It is not just the physical contact that prevents Ethan from killing the last of his family; there is also a sense of the profound memories which are flooding into his consciousness as he touches her. The lifting gesture, which seems almost involuntary, recalls the moment inside the home long ago when he lifted the child Debbie into his arms. Gone now is the hatred caused by his knowledge that she has slept with the man who violated his lover; gone are the years when she only existed for him as Scar's squaw. The proximity of his scalping of Scar is vital. When Ethan rises after the scalping, we do not see the corpse. We see only his face, and it is a face almost identical to the one which looked upon the burning home, a face purged of all passion. When Ethan chases Debbie, it is more out of reflex (this is the moment he has been steeling himself to for years) than from any real hatred or desire to kill her. He has been freed from his memories of Martha by a deeper, tribal memory.

At the end, the symbolic acknowledgment of white and red heritages takes place as Martin accepts Laurie and the family embraces Debbie, still wearing her Indian clothes, on the doorstep of their home. And it is then that Ethan, who seemed on the verge of entering the Jorgensons' doorway (the future), steps aside to let the young couple pass him by and turns away to 'wander forever between the winds' like his Indian nemesis. Scar and Ethan, blood-brothers in their commitment to primitive justice, have sacrificed themselves to make civilisation possible. This is the meaning of the door opening and closing on the wilderness. It is the story of America. ■



Inside Robert Mulligan

John Russell Taylor

I think the first and most lasting thing one carries away from Robert Mulligan's films is a pervasive, not altogether explicable sense of strangeness. Outside the warm, lighted circle in which his principal characters move—often in twos—the world is a curious, frightening place. As the hero of *The Pursuit of Happiness* says when he has finally decided to contract out (with his girl friend), 'There's a nervous breakdown going on out there, and I don't want to be part of it.' And Mulligan's films, right through from *Fear Strikes Out*, abound in images of a world not so much gone mad as out of the individual's control, beyond his ability to manage and manipulate. The response of the young athlete in *Fear Strikes Out*—a retreat into complete insanity, faced with the impossibility of living up to or changing the world's, and particularly his father's, expectations of him—is the most despairing; elsewhere Mulligan's characters usually settle, or try to settle, for a small garden they can cultivate without interference, an escape into a limited, manageable world of private relationships. But the world outside remains a menace which hardly anyone in a Mulligan film cares directly to confront.

For this reason Mulligan, of all the distinguished generation of graduates from television to which he belongs, has remained content with the smallest subjects, and the quietest approach to them. One cannot imagine him launching into the ambitious classic adaptations of Sidney Lumet, whose assistant he was in television days, let alone the occasional spectacles with which Frankheimer (who was his assistant) has leavened his own smaller-scale productions. Only with the last of this particular succession, Sydney Pollack (who was Frankheimer's assistant), is there any likely occasion of comparison; and if *This Property is Condemned* could be a Mulligan subject, even to the casting, which reunites Natalie Wood and Robert Redford from *Inside Daisy Clover*, it is unlikely that Mulligan would have dealt with it in the all-out romantic style adopted by Pollack. Mulligan is essentially the quietist of his generation, and it seems to be more his lack of self-assertiveness than anything else which has kept him from being ranked with others—Lumet or Frankheimer, for instance—whose films, while showier taken one by one, add up finally to a far less satisfactory and consistent overall oeuvre.

There are other reasons too, of course. Notably, his failure immediately to clinch the success of *Fear Strikes Out* in 1957 with other films of obviously comparable quality. Even at the end of 1963, after *Love with the Proper Stranger* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Cahiers du Cinéma* are to be found observing, in their bumper American Cinema number, that *Fear Strikes Out* took us all in. The auteur of the film might be the producer, the scriptwriter, the cameraman, anyone, but certainly not 'the laborious director', who had subsequently shown himself fit only to turn out glossies 'dans l'axe clarence-brownien' for such star-monsters as Gregory

Peck and Rock Hudson. Far be it from me to maintain that *The Great Imposter*, *Come September*, *The Spiral Road* or even *The Rat Race* is an unrecognised masterpiece, but they are really not so bad as all that; seen again on television they remain surprisingly fresh and pleasing, giving life to a not particularly ambitious or unconventional body of material with a lot of vivid and charming touches of characterisation and atmosphere.

The trouble then was that they were, or seemed to be, exactly the kinds of film the much publicised infusion of new blood from television was supposed to have banished for ever from the cinema. Lumet or Frankheimer might have their failures, but at least they were pretentious, arty failures; we could feel that even if they had not brought off *The Fugitive Kind* or *The Pawnbroker*, *The Young Savages* or *The Train*, at least they had greatly, nobly dared. No one could really say that about their contemporaries among Mulligan's films, even if, in their milder, humbler way, they were more pleasing and successful.

But I must not give the impression that I wish to elevate Mulligan's films largely by doing down Lumet and Frankheimer. More to the point, there seems to me to be a consistent and coherent personality behind all Mulligan's work, whoever wrote it (Mulligan is disarmingly mistrustful of the auteur theory, and emphatic about the importance he attributes to writers in the film-making process) and whether or not it was produced by Alan Pakula, who has been associated with Mulligan on *Fear Strikes Out* and a sequence of six films, from *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) up to *The Stalking Moon* (1968), as well as, in his own *The Sterile Cuckoo*, alias *Pookie*, coming up with something so close to the Mulligan

image that one might be forgiven for wondering whether, if the credit for the Mulligan-Pakula films is not largely his, at least the team is far stronger than its constituents apart from each other. (It would not be the only case, after all, of a producer-auteur who has the knack of making directors who work with him look considerably more impressive than they do left to their own devices.) But fortunately, since his last films with Pakula, Mulligan has made two perfectly characteristic films on his own, *The Pursuit of Happiness* and *Summer of '42*, while by all accounts Pakula's second solo film, *Klute*, is a sharp detective thriller of a very different cast. And even in the four films Mulligan made in his 'off' period after *Fear Strikes Out* there are lines of continuity, not only in subject-matter (for who knows how much freedom of choice Mulligan had in his subjects at this time?) but also, more importantly, in the overall creative approach.

The Rat Race, for instance, is quite recognisably a backward-looking piece of rosy realism such as we would expect from its writer, Garson Kanin, himself a survivor from the pre-war period. The ready sentiment and easy humour of its romance between a naïve musician from out of town and the scarcely less naïve dance-hall hostess with whom he has to share a room seem to hark back too. But it is given a sharper inflection by the way Mulligan handles it, with his insistence on the isolation of the two principals in a hostile and mysterious city; and in other respects it looks rather like a sketch for *Love with the Proper Stranger*, which isolates the elements we may suppose to have most interested Mulligan—the jazz background of the character played by Tony Curtis in *The Rat Race* and Steve McQueen in *Love with the Proper Stranger*, the initially tough and finally tender urban romance between two loners in the unwelcoming city—and sharpens them into something more recognisable as a personal statement.

Mulligan has been accused of being a sentimentalist. But if personal integrity of some sort nearly always makes out in his films (only in *Baby*, the *Rain Must Fall* is his central character finally defeated by circumstances—defeated according to his own criteria, that is—and even there it all depends on whether you take Steve McQueen, the would-be pop musician on parole from the penitentiary, or his wife, the stoical, indestructible Lee Remick, as the central character), this making-out is never easy. And never, except arguably in *Up the Down Staircase*, does it come from a convenient and unlikely softening-up of the opposition. In all Mulligan's films the heroes make themselves what they are, carve their private place in the world out of fear and nightmare.

It is significant that by far the least effective part of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the half-hour devoted to the trial of a Negro accused of raping a white girl, with defence lawyer Gregory Peck playing as so often our ideal liberal hero and for the moment at least dominating the situation. Here the film's child characters are relegated to mere incidental spectators of their father's professional set-piece. Elsewhere they are unmistakably centre-stage, and the film is all too uncomfortably gripping so long as it

sticks to the dark fantasy world and scarcely less dark real world in which they live, unbeknownst to their father and the adults with whom they come into contact. Here everything is sinister and unmanageable: the local lunatic they build into a bogey-man; the relatively sane but vengeful neighbour who tries to take out his grudge against the father on them; the glimpses of a half-understood, and therefore all the more intimidating, adult world of prejudice, lynch-law and finally violent death. Admittedly, help does eventually come from a most unlikely quarter—the 'bogey-man' turns out to be a friend in disguise—but that hardly modifies the overall picture the film presents of everything outside the close-knit circle of the children as dark and sown with unnamable terrors. And this, even though the apparent message of the subject—so effective in getting Gregory Peck an Oscar—would seem to be a liberal-humanist one of right somehow, if only indirectly, triumphing in the end.

Precisely the same view of childhood emerges, retrospectively, in *Baby, the Rain Must Fall*, where everything we learn of Steve McQueen's background in the mouldering house with the dotty old woman, Miss Kate, who brought him up has the same not quite accountable, sinister, other-worldly quality. Nor do things get better in adolescence. *Summer of '42* is a series of rather nightmarish confrontations between the teenage hero and the grown-up world: the endless embarrassment of his attempts to buy contraceptives from a resolutely uncomprehending chemist (a scene which has often been played for comedy but here is pushed well beyond comedy into hallucination), the strangely remote and ghostly final encounter with sex in the shape of the young bride who, almost somnambulistically, takes our hero into her bed as an only half-understood response to the news that her husband has been killed in the war. And even the flashback framework provided by the soundtrack, in which the boy, now grown-up, muses on this crucial event of his youth, is hardly reassuring: it would seem from what he says that, so far from being a therapeutic *Tea-and-Sympathy* release of inhibitions, his brief contact with the young widow has given him the most intense emotional experience of his life, one from which he has never recovered.

But all this is conveyed largely by the treatment, the angle of directorial approach, rather than by what is immediately recognisable as implicit in the script. In this, *Summer of '42*, with its strangely doom-laden atmosphere, is surprisingly close to *Inside Daisy Clover* (1965), one of Mulligan's best, and most radically under-estimated, films. There too it is remarkable, given the subject and its structure, how generally downbeat the handling is. The points of contact between *Inside Daisy Clover* and *A Star is Born* are obvious, and are if anything emphasised in Gavin Lambert's adaptation of his own novel. But the giddy-ing process of the star Daisy Clover's birth is made oddly spectral, with the studio rearing up about her in gloomy menace, the sound stages dark and silent, and the whole process presided over remotely by the strangely impassive, inhuman producer played by Christopher Plummer (significantly dubbed the 'prince of darkness' by

another of his 'creations', the charming, two-faced romantic star Robert Redford) and his even more remote and sinister consort. Nothing here of the wild acceleration which carried Vicky Lester to the heights and built us up for the big letdown; instead everything is kept muted, intimate, with the shadow of the madhouse to which Daisy's mother (Ruth Gordon) has been thoughtfully confined brooding over all, and the recurrent metaphor of the world as a load of garbage on which human beings are merely flies to diminish even the biggest temporary triumphs.

The only really light-hearted, triumphant moment in the film is the last, when Daisy, after a few ineffectual attempts to kill herself, decides to take off by herself (like the hero of *The Pursuit of Happiness* with his girl) to start again, think things out, seize whatever chance she may have to make her own world instead of being confined in the hostile one made by other people. The break, of course, has to be explosive: Daisy literally blows up her past; the boy in *The Pursuit of Happiness* tears himself free of his family and social roots one by one before taking off in the cold dawn, flying past the grimly unconcerned Statue of Liberty (so unlike his friend's dream of her earlier in the film as a sexually aroused, monstrous earth-mother) to who knows what future.

He has a family, but like families in Mulligan's films, where they figure at all, it is of little or no use to him. At worst, like the father in *Fear Strikes Out* or Miss Kate in *Baby, the Rain Must Fall*, the family situation may be the root of the whole problem. In *Summer of '42* 'family' is the disembodied voice of the mother, never seen, but merely a tiresome, questioning presence on the fringes. In *The Pursuit of Happiness* we encounter a whole range of family—the embattled grandmother, defending her mansion against the rising tide of Jews, Negroes, Catholics and other riffraff, the efficient, unsympathetic lawyer-uncle, the mild, liberal father who has himself already contracted out, in his own way, and is therefore no more help than the others. And all of them trying desperately, according to their own lights, to make a private world which will work and protect them against the menace from without. To each his own world, of course, and none with room in it for anyone else, anyone who doesn't fit. Hell, after all, is other people.

The only way out, sometimes, is love. *Love with the Proper Stranger* is a love story in which the menace is perfectly genuine, strong and difficult to resist. The principal characters—Steve McQueen as the jazz musician who has casually impregnated a one-night pickup, Natalie Wood as the girl who consequently finds herself in an embarrassing situation—are superficially tougher, more urban, more in control of themselves and their environment than the central couple in *The Rat Race*; but their loneliness and insecurity, their divorce from their families and from the city in which they live, is finally no less disturbing. The climactic scene of their relationship, in which he, quite irrationally, refuses to let her go through with a grimy backstreet abortion, merely crystallises something about the forces of life, of otherness, which are always, slowly but surely, bearing in upon

them and which they can perhaps resist, perhaps escape from, only in a private retreat of their own making. For there is the possibility, if no more, of strength in loving union.

Certainly this implies sentiment, but not necessarily sentimentality. There is an abrasive reality and precision about Mulligan's realisation of the places his characters live in, the people they meet, which constantly works against the sentimentalising tendency. Indeed, in all his films the sense of place and atmosphere plays a leading role. The New York scene as we see it in several of his films is fresh, unhackneyed and believable: scenes like the girl's first meeting with the man's parents in an open-air amusement park in *Love with the Proper Stranger*, or the hero's battle with the traffic as he tries to make his escape in *The Pursuit of Happiness* (a sequence played, in characteristic Mulligan fashion, for character and right against the grain of obvious suspense) come at once to mind.

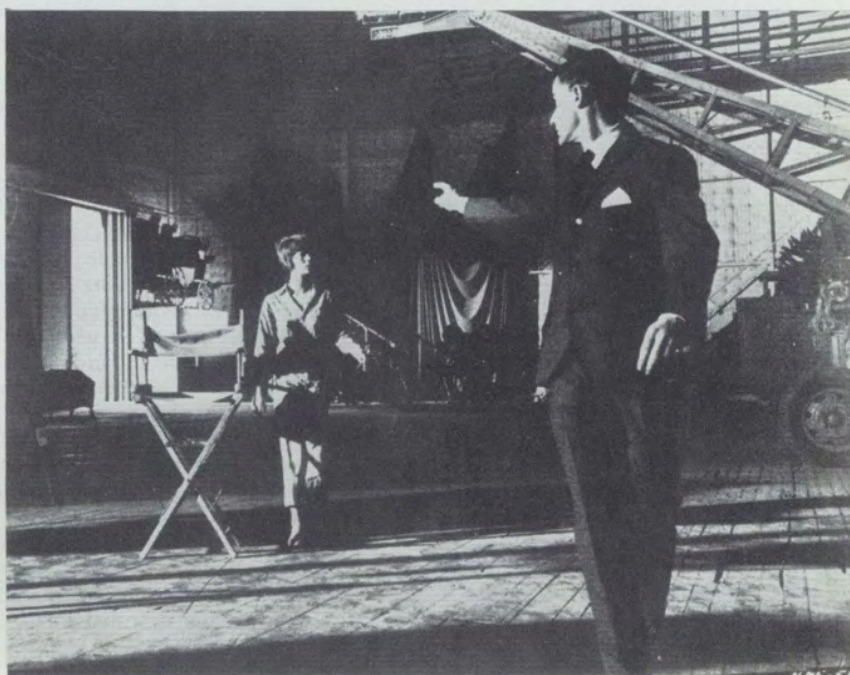
But outside New York the effect is even more impressive: the bleak, cheerless Texas town in *Baby, the Rain Must Fall*, and the small house with its pathetic bare plot of ground where the central couple try vainly to keep their family together (love does not necessarily conquer all); the holiday island in *Summer of '42*, seen as it were permanently through a haze of unhappy memory. Or the striking decors of *The Stalking Moon*, a love story disguised as a Western in which the relations of the central couple (Gregory Peck and Eva Marie Saint, as retired Army Scout and rescued white squaw) are defined largely by the places in which they find themselves—the deserted, sun-baked railway halt in the middle of nowhere at which, after many hours' wait for a train that may or may not come, the Scout finally makes his tentative proposal; the rat-trap house he has bought for his retirement, in which they are beleaguered and brought really together by the violent attentions of the woman's former Indian mate. If the principals in *The Stalking Moon*, *Love with the Proper Stranger* and *The Pursuit of Happiness* seem finally to find some sort of resolution to, or at least respite from, their problems by clinging together for mutual protection and reassurance, the answer is never taken too easily, sentimentally for granted.

In fact, the only Mulligan film which could with justice be accused of sentimentality is *Up the Down Staircase*, and here at least the lapse is shameless—the film is unmistakably a fairy story, and is presented as such. One does not really believe that the apparently frail forces of goodness and culture (embodied in Sandy Dennis, the new teacher in a New York sink school) will really triumph over all the trials put in their way; but in fairy stories good always wins, and it is fair enough to stay within the convention provided it is recognised as such. Elsewhere Mulligan's world is a grim and intimidating enough place, with only the small virtues, the intimate qualities of personal integrity, private affection, to shore against its ruins. The films, like their heroes, are modest, quiet, but stubborn. And it would not surprise me at all if, in the long run, they prove just as stubbornly lasting, when others with larger immediate reputations have been cut down to size or quite forgotten. ■

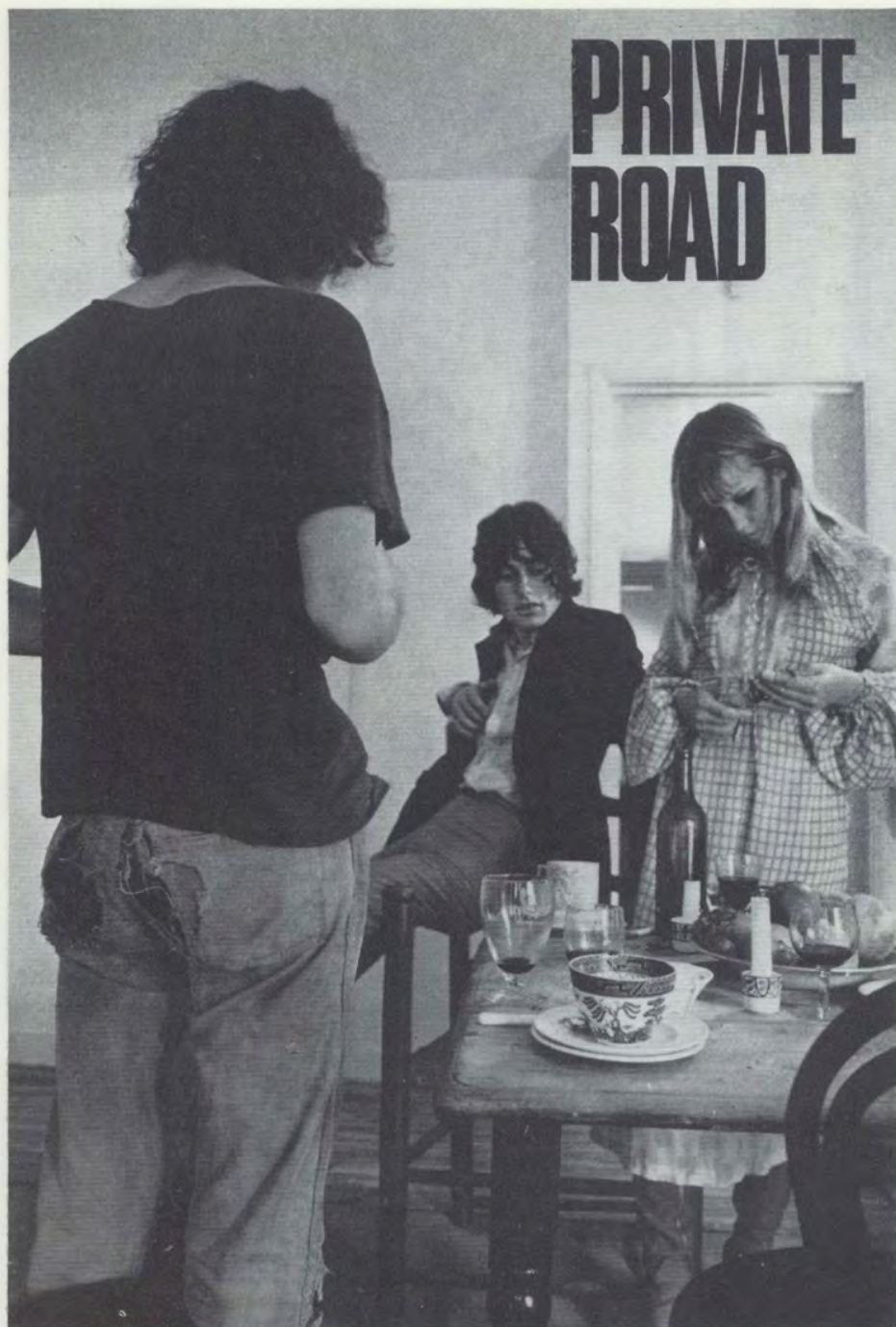


The World of Robert Mulligan

Above: Steve McQueen in 'Baby, the Rain Must Fall'. Below: Philip Alford in 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. Right, above: Natalie Wood and Steve McQueen in 'Love with the Proper Stranger'; centre: Jennifer O'Neill and Gary Grimes in 'Summer of '42'; below: Natalie Wood enters upon the dark and silent sound stages in 'Inside Daisy Clover'.



PRIVATE ROAD



Penelope Houston

Private Road confirms what *Bronco Bullfrog* strongly suggested: that in Barney Platts-Mills English cinema has acquired an authentic original. On the face of it, the new film has probably rather less to offer. *Bronco Bullfrog* could be read (I think wrongly) as social documentary; *Private Road*, in moving away from the East End, is also leaving behind one of the cinema's sociologically protected areas. It comes a millimetre or so closer to telling a story, which is not really Platts-Mills' line: few directors would seem to have less taste, or perhaps less natural aptitude, for the sheer structure of plot. Given a straight story-line from A to B, one feels he would automatically check the map readings for possible detours. And in this film he is working with professional actors, which means that his laconically improvised style is operating at one somewhat tricky remove. Actors, Platts-Mills rather austere comments, talk too much. But if anyone talks more than actors, it is aspiring writers

and advertising men, the characters he is engaged with in *Private Road*. Perhaps Platts-Mills inspires all his casts, and not only the almost wordless boys and girls of *Bronco Bullfrog*, to a muted, desultory and circumspect conversational style.

Peter Morissey (Bruce Robinson), the central character of *Private Road*, is actually a rather odd fish among young writers. He has had a couple of stories published in *Woman's Own* (indeed), and on the strength of them is signed up for a novel and given an advance running into several hundred pounds. Later in the film, he has a freakishly successful and businesslike spell at an advertising agency, running a campaign for puddings for dogs. But these wayward evidences of exploitable talent fit absolutely nothing else in the character. What kind of writer is he really trying to be? His agent's comment on the eventual novel ('undisciplined and . . . er . . . a little old-fashioned') sounds ironically like the kind of criticism

Platts-Mills himself has probably had to listen to; along with the yearning of the professional to take the work in hand and 'make something of it'. I can't believe in those *Woman's Own* stories, any more than I can see Platts-Mills himself competing in that kind of market. The odd thing is that what ought to be a rather crucial failure of plausibility becomes, in the film's actual context, of little account. *Private Road* is naturalistic filming with a difference: hesitancy, uncertainty, inarticulacy ('Oh, Christ,' Morissey keeps exclaiming, faced with further evidence of life's numbing false starts) become part of a consistent style.

Boy meets girl, sitting hunched moonily over her typewriter and eating a peach with a concentration one feels she mightn't give to her shorthand, during a visit to his agent's office. On the strength of the advance, he takes her away from Esher and her family to set up house. ('She's very clean,' he says warily to his two flatmates, who suggest that she might simply move in to their untidy household.) Later, they manage to complete, as it were, the romantic journey forlornly begun by the couple in *Bronco Bullfrog*; to a cottage in Argyll where Peter, a hopeful romantic, lurches and lollops through the bracken with a borrowed shotgun in search of rabbits. The huntsman's dream dies, dimly, before the domestic reality: the girl, Ann, flatly refuses to skin the rabbit.

Back in London, Peter's novel is turned down, and Ann finds that she's pregnant and retreats secretly on the security of Esher and an abortion paid for by her parents. Peter rather wants to marry her; or at least doesn't want *not* to marry her. It is left to his friend Stephen (Michael Feast), British rail porter, would-be airline pilot, guitar-player and drug addict, to wonder whether Ann isn't rather a dull, damp-souled girl. (But then, Platts-Mills very quietly seems to suggest, what's Peter?) Stephen steals an electric typewriter from under the nose of a phlegmatic secretary, who waves away this tool of her trade with every appearance of satisfaction, and sits Peter down in front of it. As with *Bronco Bullfrog*, the ending is open and speculative. *Bronco* ends on an exhilarating, childish escape, with the certainty that there is nowhere to escape to; *Private Road* suggests that Peter will probably choose Ann, put up with Esher, and watch Stephen go the way of the nonconformist, the romantic who sees other people's reality more clearly than his own.

'English Truffaut,' a colleague said of the film, in a tone too delicately balanced to reveal whether any disparagement was intended. Yes and no. The typewriter theft, and the idyllic idiocy of the rabbit hunt, are Truffaut episodes; but they are also in a sense the most conscious scenes in the film, engaging contrivances in a more casually understated context. In *Baisers Volés* and *Domicile Conjugal*, the obvious comparisons, Truffaut is working far from casually: he celebrates the role of chance and coincidence in life, but the films' chances are elegantly arranged by the director. The set scenes in *Private Road*, in which one feels the director most consciously as a controlling presence, tend to be the least successful.

The girl's father, for instance, is the film's most uncomfortable character, partly because the actor, Robert Brown, seems to see the

Bruce Robinson, Susan Penhaligon

father as a dull dog, alternating irate barks with tailwagging appeals for his perplexing daughter's affection; more because he takes Platts-Mills outside the circle of his own sympathy. The character is not allowed the luxury of an independent life: he exists monotonously as a parent. The most successful character, conversely and unexpectedly, is the wayward drug-addict, Stephen. He is simply allowed to be, to react, to appear and disappear in the other characters' lives, detached, ironic, dreamy, moving in and out of contact. In one scene, caught in the half-dark at a bus stop, he appears inexplicably strange, as though glimpsed on the edge of a darker world. He comes back into the light, arriving at Peter and Ann's flat with his belongings in a paper-bag and sending Ann into a screaming fit by retreating to her bathroom for an injection. He expresses the balance of tolerances in this only superficially casual film.

Platts-Mills is not a director who shapes the ends of his characters: he lets them meander, watches with offhand humour and occasional piercing attention, assumes no attitudes. Even Milos Forman, in *Taking Off*, sees his runaway young people as an extravagant phenomenon, unapproachably alien dream-walkers; Truffaut, who is so much better with parents than Platts-Mills, is protectively concerned that we should be charmed by Léaud's childishness, his drop-out job as a tinter of carnations. But Barney Platts-Mills' odd and integral talent is that he keeps resisting dramatic points, the temptation to put pressure on a sequence so that it stands for something larger than itself. The film is cut as though against the textbook grain, scenes either drifting to a stop or held as though there were another sentence still to come, which the actor never got round to speaking. Early sequences are probably over-abridged, suggesting that material has been cut away (and Platts-Mills in fact confirms this), because for one reason or another it failed to connect. The point is that what's left *does* connect, more haphazardly but perhaps also more tellingly than *Bronco Bullfrog*. The East End boys and girls could be seen as victims of an inexorable system, in which parents and policemen acted as half-conscious agents of repression; Peter Morissey and his friends are on their own, and the main drawback of parents is seen as being that they make demands, force issues, are insistent on drama. Neither the director, for his film, nor his characters, for their lives, want this.

Barney Platts-Mills, in other words, is filming from his side of the generation gulf; and if the view looks slightly hazy, that's not unexpected. He is not out to interpret *them* to *us*; or to wave banners for alternative societies. Rather far from it. The film raises its eyebrows slightly at its most consciously 'political' character, a Women's Lib. type of girl who thumpingly rebukes her more feckless friends with the austere comment, 'I don't think that being *nice* is what we need now.' Platts-Mills conceivably feels that being nice is rather what we need; and on occasion he films like an unashamed romantic. A shot of the Thames at night, misty and grey, with lights palely shining from the railway bridges, is held in a way which simply makes you feel that it gave the



Escape to Argyll: Bruce Robinson

director and cameraman (Adam Barker-Mill) some pleasure. Nice is probably the word for it; but there is no nudging the audience into a moment of affected lyricism.

It's a relief, of course, to get away from generation-gap posturing, campus exhibitionism, the callow exploiting the callow, to a film which simply suggests that its characters would like to be left alone to work things out, and to stare when they want to at the river. And it is rather refreshing to find a young director keeping decor as an understated background: the ironing-board back in its place as an ironing-board, not a symbol of servitude; the books left on the shelves, not stacked as an invitation to check titles to be sure that the characters are keeping up with their reading of Marcuse or Borges or Herzen.

Both Platts-Mills' films suggest a dislike of the cluttered screen; and the young film has suffered more than most from surrounding its characters with all the junk off the instant pop shelf. But what distinguishes him from most slightly older contemporaries, and for that matter predecessors, is his retreat from didacticism. A film-maker like Ken Loach, for instance, has absorbed the narrowing-down techniques of TV drama, the mistrust of space in which nothing very much is happening, and in which the audience's eye is being given no special direction. Loach is a partisan film-maker, and even when he's showing a 'neutral' action, like some of the child's solitary

walks in *Kes*, he is working hard to impose on the audience his own awareness.

The Free Cinema film-makers, with whom Platts-Mills has some affinities, were expressing an irate and romantic socialism, tinged with paternalism. 'These good and friendly faces deserve a place of pride on the screens of their country, and I will fight for the notion of community which will give it to them,' wrote Lindsay Anderson at the time of *Every Day Except Christmas*. But 'good and friendly faces' is not, somehow, quite the expression one uses of people one regards as one's equals. Platts-Mills, who must have been about twelve when Anderson was filming in Covent Garden, assumes a natural equality with his characters. One doesn't feel that he went into the East End to make *Bronco Bullfrog* with the intention of 'giving' anyone anything; and in both his films the ordinary is simply ordinary, the pressure low. Only time will make it clear whether this is going to be the approach of a new generation of film-makers, or whether the cool democracy behind the camera is an expression of individual temperament.

Private Road is a title which seems to suit the director as well as his film. A press handout from Maya Films says of *Bronco Bullfrog* that 'in spite of its critical reception . . . the film has yet to make a penny of its cost back for the production company, all its earnings having been swallowed up by distributors' expenses.' After this daunting demonstration of film industry economics (and object lesson in the imbalance between production and sales), Maya are going it alone with *Private Road*, bypassing the usual distribution channels. It's an experiment to be closely watched, because it is more and more evident that any effective independent cinema depends on breaking the sales deadlock. A film as openly unassuming as *Private Road* becomes a test of whether there's a new audience to be reached, on that embryo British campus circuit, and whether if reached it will support anything so unfashionably quiet, so ready to recognise tentativeness as a state of mind. Meanwhile, Barney Platts-Mills is not a film-maker to be bracketed away in the category known as 'promising'. He is already what he is; the romantically sceptical spokesman for the inarticulate. ■

Michael Feast, Bruce Robinson, and the secretary robbed of her typewriter



Film REVIEWS

Klute

Levels upon levels upon levels. Like all good films, Alan Pakula's *Klute* (Warner) tells several stories at once, not so much in layers which peel away one by one to reveal hidden depths, as in parallel steps leading relentlessly up to the dark at the top of the stairs.

First story, and mainspring of the action: a highly respectable Pennsylvania businessman has disappeared, the only clue to the mystery being the fact that he apparently wrote an obscene letter to a callgirl in New York, a slender lead which sets private eye John Klute off on his trail through the labyrinth. Second story: the callgirl, Bree Daniel, seriously determined to change her ways, is not only taking acting lessons, but undergoing psychoanalysis because she is honest enough to admit that her wishes and her subconscious drives are very different things. Third story, and this one sustaining many dimensions, the reverberation of the moment when Bree's guard of dry self-analysis drops to reveal something much more vulnerable, and she confesses, 'You'll laugh, but I'm afraid of the dark.' Initially, she tells Klute this because she has been frightened by a sinister, unseen presence on the roof; but it also underlies her nervous shying away from involvement when she realises that Klute's wayward passion for her is beginning to change into tenderness; and finally, in the unstated, secret motif of the film, it illuminates her failure to realise that this love, which she at last dares to accept, is the darkness she fears.

Tangentially, at least, with its superb chiaroscuro apprehension (the colour is perfectly dominated) of the darker, more mysterious corners of human perversities and bizarre locations, *Klute* seems to me much more authentically Chandlerish than all those films from *Harper* onwards which tried so consciously, and self-consciously, to reproduce the idiosyncratic world of the Forties thriller. Perhaps because it doesn't try so hard. But more, I think, because it realises that things have changed so that, to quote the Godard of *Le Petit Soldat*, 'The time for action is past . . . the time for reflection is beginning.'

So *Klute* begins on a note of contemplative obsession. First, in a scene of mute, suspended puzzlement which exudes a sense of lingering trauma akin to Bertolucci's *Spider's Strategy*, the missing man's family and friends are seen transfixed at a dinner-table with one empty place speaking volumes at the end, while the facts of the case are quietly recapped by a police lieutenant. Then come the credits, hypnotically superimposed over a miniature tape-recorder with a girl's voice droning on and on, quietly, obscenely, tantalisingly, half revealing another mystery one cannot quite grasp.

Almost immediately, strong plot-hooks are thrown out, establishing swiftly and elliptically that Bree Daniel (Jane Fonda), having failed to get a modelling job she has auditioned for, has gone back to prostitution, and that she is to be the first point of attack for Klute (Donald Sutherland), who agrees to take the case because he happens to be a friend of the family, and because the police have failed to get anywhere in six months of investigation. The wheels

start turning for a splendidly traditional *film noir*: the dark, shadowy figure, sometimes heard but mostly sensed, behind windows and on the rooftops, keeping a sinister watch on Bree; the seedy parade of pimps and madame, and the two callgirls, one dead and the other a junkie, also soon to die, who may be the key to the mystery; the inevitable showdown in a dark, deserted tailor's shop with the homicidal maniac stalking his victim from a camouflage of headless tailor's dummies. All fine, rousing stuff, but as the film progresses, one realises that not only are these plot-hooks not grappling, they were never designed to grapple. Or at least, not in the traditional narrative sense.

The giveaway is an extraordinary scene—voyeur observing voyeur—when Klute, unable to persuade Bree to talk about her relationship with the missing man (she can't remember anyway), rents a room in the same apartment block so as to keep her under observation. Hearing her make an assignation, evidently with a client, he follows and watches through the window in bafflement at the strange and tender little charade which ensues. The 'client' is a dignified, white-bearded old gentleman, and as he sits at his desk gravely listening like a child being rewarded with his favourite fairytale, she tells him the story of an enchanted romance of which he is evidently the hero, she the heroine, at the same time performing a chaste striptease.

Despite the fact that, as Bree later explains, she was simply indulging an old man whose only pleasure now is in paying to see her body, the way the scene is presented leaves no room for sordid realities. Grace of movement and emotion make it a moment of magic, burying all other

implications until one is left with an impression of pure innocence. And it is this innocence he has glimpsed which makes Klute fall in love with her, just as it makes her balk at committing herself—she is too honest to deny any responsibility for her way of life—until she is finally and reluctantly persuaded by Klute's persistence that even she may love and be loved.

But just as Bree can never really solve the problem of the subconscious sexual drives which made her a callgirl, so Klute can never really solve his problem, for precisely the same reason. True he establishes the facts of the case, unearthing the murderer and the reasons why he killed the missing man and the two callgirls, but only because the object of his own desires is threatened. After witnessing the scene with the old man, Klute becomes obsessed with Bree to the exclusion of all else; and obsessed in a very real sense, as she half guesses, when she wonders aloud how he can possibly love her after seeing her stripped down to her depths of fear and degradation.

By the end, the private eye and the girl are in each other's arms. But all is not quite as it once was with Bogart and Bacall, since what we have been watching is not the unravelling of a mystery but the creation of one. The i's are mercilessly dotted in the penultimate scene when the unhappy pervert-murderer, just before throwing himself out of the window, accuses Bree in a long soliloquy, not so much of self-justification as of explanation, which calls as its chief witness the same voice, teasing and tantalising with sexual provocation, which was heard over the credits. You, he tells her, girls like you, you make us what we are. He then dies as Klute makes the traditional cavalry charge to the rescue, and Bree is safe again . . . or has John Klute taken his place?

The question remains unanswered by the film unless one goes back (and why not, since the film's construction is clearly circular, with Klute perhaps reported missing from his office. . .) to a remarkable earlier scene which then had a strange reverberation out of all proportion to its context in the film. Bree is alone in her room, preparing to go to bed. Clearly ill at ease and evidently going through the motions of a ritual, she lights a candle, sits down at the table, inhales deeply on a marijuana cigarette, and softly begins to croon a revivalist hymn to herself. The tele-

Jane Fonda in 'Klute'



phone rings: it is an obscene call, and she huddles even more deeply into herself. And as the camera moves out from close-up to frame the little pool of comforting illumination in the surrounding darkness (one is irresistibly reminded of the scene in *Night of the Hunter* where Mitchum and Gish, hunter and hunted, join each other in a hymn), the whole ritual is revealed as an incantation to keep fear at bay.

Fear of what? Fear of the dark, of course, the dark world we live in, the dark fancies of the human mind, the dark of the moon which is adumbrated in a love which hangs on a knife-edge of ambivalence. Truly, *Klute* is a film noir, one of black, tender despair for human relationships. It proves Jane Fonda to be a superb actress and Alan Pakula a director to be watched very closely indeed.

TOM MILNE

McCabe and Mrs. Miller

Disconcertingly, after the tuneless rendering of the Star Spangled Banner that introduced *Brewster McCloud*, or the 'Tokyo Rose' transmissions that lent an insane kind of musical continuity to *M*A*S*H*, it is Leonard Cohen's gentle ballad 'The Stranger' that both introduces and accompanies Robert Altman's latest film, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (Warner). Disconcertingly but appropriately, to the point where one suspects Altman of extrapolating his scenario from the song rather than from the Edmund Naughton novel on which he and Brian McKay based their script. The film stubbornly defies analogies or easy pigeon-holing; but its mood is closer to that of Cohen's writing, with its transitions from obscenity to finely wrought metaphor in the evocation of fear, tentatively raised hopes and final impenetrable loneliness, than to anything one had come to expect from Altman.

His McCabe is the embodiment of Cohen's dealer 'who wants to trade the game he knows for shelter.' He's first followed in long shot as his horse stumbles through the inhospitably darkening forest and blinding, muffling snowstorm towards the shanty mining town of Presbyterian Church. And the aura of defeat and distance established by the song and the opening shots clings to the character through all his ebullient triumphs, eclipsing even the reputation as a gunfighter that has preceded him into town. Ultimately we know, and he knows, that he is 'reaching for the sky just to surrender.' The jovial black absurdity of Altman's earlier films, with their chaotic depiction of both licensed and unlawful lunacy, here darkens into a virtually existentialist notion of the Absurd. Though the jokes still fall as thick and fast, it is the film's muted but unanswerable sadness that predominates.

Formally, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is a comedy Western, charting the fluctuating fortunes of McCabe (Warren Beatty), a small-time gambler now scraping the bottom of the barrel in Presbyterian Church. With his easily won profits, he invests in three 'chippies' of equally dubious cleanliness, dedication and talent, and is happily operating his makeshift bordello in tents poised on the edge of a construction site when an ambitious English whore called Constance Miller (Julie Christie) arrives with a proposition that glitters with promise of the big-time. Soon the pair are partners in a brothel whose unprecedented refinement brings the town trade and prosperity; and, in their wake, the representatives of a mining company, who send in hired killers when McCabe proves unwilling to be bought out at their price. By now emotionally out of his depth with Mrs. Miller, and out of his league with big business, McCabe engages in a suicidal battle with the gunmen, and only the shareholders somewhere back East are left to reap the rewards of his labours.



'McCabe and Mrs. Miller'

Despite the stock characters of itinerant gambler and tough madam, both perversely refusing to conform to type, and the climactic gunfight that in the event proves disturbingly anti-climactic (photographed like much of the film through a pointillist snow, and with none of the townsfolk even aware that it's happening), the West provides Altman with considerably more than a formal structure. It is the very bones of his film, and Leon Ericksen's sets (on which Altman is said to have spent almost the whole of his budget before a frame was shot) are authoritatively realistic, recalling the uncomfortable and ramshackle constructions of old frontier photographs.

There is a sense of the transitory about all the relationships in the film, and the sets echo this: makeshift buildings always in construction or collapse; a church which rises throughout the film only to be finally gutted by fire. The weather, too, is unusually capricious, conspiring with the giant forests and empty landscapes to emphasise man's precarious footing in nature, caught and held in our last glimpse of McCabe's body being transformed and then obliterated by the snow. The very accuracy of the turn of the century period detail implies not just that these things shall pass, but that they have passed. Even the consistent mistiness of the camerawork, like the opium to which Constance resorts to face the world, establishes the characters as lying just beyond our help or reach.

Then, too, the West provides Altman with material for extending his satire of American attitudes. It reveals an ideology and an economic system in the making, as McCabe's route from gambler to speculator, and final extinction at the hands of big business, takes him through a capsule version of the economic history of the United States. The exploitation of people and feelings is somehow an extension of a necessary exploitation of the land itself—an all too fragile and illusory defence against annihilation. Greed is the other side of fear, and even the exploited Chinese, whose lives are rated at only fifty dollars apiece, peddle their wares and run their opium dens.

As befits a hymn to vanquished individualism, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is built around the uneasy relationship between its title characters—a relationship as makeshift and ephemeral as everything else in the film. But Altman again devotes much screen time to inconsequential exchanges between 'peripheral' characters, many from his repertory company, with René

Auberjonois as always splendid as a scrounging Irish barkeeper. In keeping with the general deflatory emphasis, Warren Beatty manages to make the tired McCabe positively uncharismatic; and if Julie Christie never quite sheds her 'star' quality, her Eliza Doolittle-ish performance gains in liveliness and point from the realistic backgrounds it is set against. Their scenes together are funny and touching, the more so because the sentimental implications are never spelled out.

In case all this sounds too solemn for the maker of *M*A*S*H*, one should emphasise that the black humour continues unabated. When McCabe runs to the church to escape the three killers, he is evicted at the point of his own shotgun by an indignant minister declaiming 'This is the House of God'. Seconds later, a gunman smashes his way into the church, glimpses the shotgun, and blasts the minister savagely into a better world.

JAN DAWSON

Taking Off

'I think I speak English well enough to understand the "first row". But what's behind that, the double meanings, and all the nuances, which are very beautiful, always this is difficult for me.' Milos Forman needn't have worried about those nuances. *Taking Off* (Rank), which he made in America last summer, is replete with them.

We say we'd like to see ourselves as others see us, but we don't always like what we see. The Czech firemen weren't too pleased about *The Firemen's Ball*, and Americans—to judge at least from American critical reaction—are somewhat disgruntled by *Taking Off*. Forman himself tells a story which illuminates the wrongheadedness of this reaction (life, as always, imitating art): when he showed *The Firemen's Ball* in small towns across the States, audiences couldn't wait to regale him with anecdotes about their own local fire brigades, and many of them, he says, were funnier than anything in the film. Forman's films are not of course about national idiosyncrasies, and *Taking Off* is no more about middle-class urban Americans than *A Blonde in Love* was about working-class provincial Czechs. The film is set in New York, but really the only specifically American thing about it is that its theme appears to be a more commonplace social phenomenon in New York than it is in London



Lynn Carlin in 'Taking Off'

or Prague. *Taking Off* is quintessentially a Forman film.

Characteristically, the theme is the generation gap, only this time seen through the eyes of the parents; the father frozen in bewilderment at the end of *Peter and Paula* is at last given his voice. When, that is, he has something to say, which isn't often. Most of the time Larry Tyne (Buck Henry) is content to meditate owl-like behind his outsize spectacles; when trouble threatens, he wanders off into a hypnotic reverie, a cigarette-substitute urged on him by a cheerfully morbid psychiatrist in a multicoloured bow tie. Larry is the sort of man who has always steered clear of trouble. He is reasonably well off, comfortably ensconced in a New York suburban apartment, a reasonably average guy. At the moment his only concern is coming to terms with the onset of middle age; and when one evening his wife Lynn (Lynn Carlin) is on the verge of hysterics after their teenage daughter has gone missing, he is nonchalantly unperturbed, though just a little confused by a situation he's not prepared for. In a marvellous bit of Forman timing he executes a kind of double shuffle and stumbles out into the night clutching a giant framed photograph of his errant daughter.

The point is, and Buck Henry's enduring look of bemused exasperation explains it all, that even if Larry doesn't understand Jeannie's reasons for running away, he at least appreciates the gesture. Driving back from a fruitless journey upstate where a counterfeit Jeannie has been arrested for stealing a Japanese portable TV set ('Sony?' asks Lynn, petit bourgeois to the last), Larry finally airs his feelings: 'She's out having fun. That's what we ought to do—go some place and have fun, goddammit.' Earlier, out looking for Jeannie in what he imagines to be likely East Village teenage haunts, Larry ends up at a bar, tipsily cracking eggs on the counter and demonstrating for his equally tipsy neighbour his self-hypnosis trick. Forman intermittently cuts back from this scene to the waiting women, with Lynn by this time blithely engrossed in her neighbour's account of her mild-mannered husband's voracious sexual appetite ('In the kitchen too... he's inimitable'), climaxed by an impromptu rendering of the song and dance routine which apparently turns him on in the middle of the night.

All through the film Forman cross-cuts between the generations, counterpointing stumbling parental pomposity with the inarticulate self-assurance of their children. Jeannie is just

one of hundreds of girls who turn up for a pop audition, an event which gives Forman the opportunity for another of his visual catalogues of the human face as the camera (Miroslav Ondricek again) probes a score of expressions and every one of them speaks volumes. The variation is in the camera eye of the beholder as much as in the object of his gaze (at one point a polaroid montage of faces takes us right through a song). And if, like the cross-cutting, the device is overindulgent in terms of the film's structure, it's an indulgence one can allow such a master of timing. Don't count the faces, count the number of times in the film Forman makes telling use of a pause or a double-take where a lesser director would have settled for a reaction shot.

Not that one can really speak of a Forman style. His art is rather that of a master craftsman, an astute and sympathetic chronicler of that mine-strewn area in human relationships between what is said, what is meant and what is understood. After the cold, and to some disenchanting, conclusion of *The Firemen's Ball*, Forman is here once again the amused and tolerant observer of human frailty. His characters may be vulnerable under the camera's close scrutiny, but his view of human nature is essentially that of an optimist; and even if it's simplistic, this tolerance is like a cool draught of air after the clammy narcissism of so much native American self-analysis. Forman's art, though, is deceptively simple. There's a stunning, almost dreamlike sequence in the film—when Buck Henry exchanges the stuffy night debris of his apartment for the mysterious promise of an urban dawn and Dvorak's 'Stabat Mater' magically soars on the soundtrack—where the resonance is infinite.

As always with Forman, there's a double edge to humour, a discomforting sense of laughter reflected in a mirror image of oneself. All the same, *Taking Off* is easily his most enjoyable film, in its best moments irresistibly funny. Larry's encounter with the woman who introduces him to the Society for the Parents of Fugitive Children (whose evening dress convention and nervous after-dinner experimentation with the pleasures and perils of drugs provide two hilarious Forman set-pieces) is in its accumulation of detail a masterpiece of comic timing, and quite possibly Forman's homage to the great American tradition of screwball comedy. It's echoed throughout the film—in the strip poker variation ('Texas one-card showdown') to which the Tynes' SPFC friends introduce them,

in the scene in the nightclub when a tight Mrs. Tyne is propositioned by a pair of jaded hustlers who know a respectable suburbanite when they see one—but it would spoil the fun to catalogue the varieties of middle-aged folly.

Even if *Taking Off* reveals in Forman a tendency to let his actors over-respond to the material, to milk it of slightly more than its promise (the last sequence in particular, a confrontation between the Tynes and their daughter's money-spinning rock musician, is a little strained in its ironic effects), there is more than enough fresh invention to demonstrate that Forman's visit to America has been richly rewarded. As he says himself, 'In any other country you are a foreigner. Here, after one week, you are an American.'

DAVID WILSON

Carnal Knowledge

'I prod you, you react. To and fro / We turn, to see ourselves perform the same / Comical act within the tragic game. / Or is it perhaps simpler: could it be / A mere tear-jerker void of honesty / In which there are no motives left to know?' This is a verse from a poem by Thom Gunn called *Carnal Knowledge*, published in the early Fifties; it might serve as an epigraph to Mike Nichols' new film. Scripted with a scrupulous off-handedness by Jules Feiffer, it deals initially with the erotic preoccupations of two Americans, Sandy (Arthur Garfunkel) and Jonathan (Jack Nicholson). We meet them first as room-mates at college in the late Forties, where they both fall for the same girl at a party. Jonathan, the more confident and attractive of the pair, significantly says that he 'gives' Susan (Candice Bergen) to Sandy. We watch Sandy's fumbling courtship intercut with his accounts of it to Jonathan, who realises that she is a good lay and summarily seduces her, only to discover that neither of them can stand the guilt of betraying Sandy; we learn that Sandy later marries Susan. The structure of this first and very successful part of *Carnal Knowledge* (Avco Embassy) is something like Rohmer's *Claire's Knee*: we see something happen and then watch it being discussed and described. The result is like a Henry James tale, full of painful and perceptive ironies about treachery.

The last sequence of this part of the film takes place at a dance. We see Susan changing partners, almost subliminally, between Sandy and Jonathan. The last shot is held for a long time while Susan, sitting at a table, laughs wildly at weak jokes made by her two lovers, who flank her out of view. Susan is thus established securely in the audience's eye and mind as a character whose importance far exceeds her divisive use as the instrument of Sandy's first lay—she is a true protagonist in the comical act within the tragic game—and it is an affront to our expectations when she is summarily removed from view for the rest of the film. Are we to take it that Nichols and Feiffer are making some point about the ruthless discontinuity of American sexual life? Did the rest of Candice Bergen's part get thrown into Feiffer's wastepaper basket, or fall on to Nichols' cutting room floor? There is no telling.

With Susan's disappearance, the balance of the film is overthrown: we are now to be concerned with witnessing the moral and sexual collapse of Jonathan—Sandy is to be little more than a sympathetic character player. Both artistically and psychologically this seems to me a crucial mistake; first and most importantly because Arthur Garfunkel gives such a beautiful performance, the embodiment of candour, anxiety and moral sweetness. He is a loving man, a far rarer creature than the priapic demon played by Jack Nicholson. With his dead, deep-set eyes glittering askew from regular features, Nicholson makes a strong physical

impact as Mephistopheles—but he is an indulgent actor for whom Nichols clearly has a sort of respect which is quite different from that which he extends to his other fine performers. Where they embody their characters with all kinds of ingenious and truthful feeling, Nicholson drives his way through the film in a moral vacuum. His rages, like his worries about his potency, are finally uninteresting. Whether we see him as a psychotic or as a shit with problems, he remains a mannered actor giving a star performance.

This is the more distressing in a film which so often succeeds in detail. The periods, first of the Forties, then the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies, are all evoked with skill. There are stylistic genuflections to the romance of the Fifties films in the artful use of back projection, as well as in one long circular shot of Nicholson and Ann-Margret at a restaurant table dining to the strains of the *Rosenkavalier* waltz. This is both affectionate, telling and a bravura piece of film-making. And the image of a beautiful girl dressed in white spinning on skates which represents desire has a Truffaut-like tenderness about it—though it is not used with either the discretion or confidence we associate with Truffaut.

The central part of the film describes Jonathan's affair with Bobbie, a model of sorts. She is the *Playmate* personified: huge-breasted, submissive, smiling, co-operative. But we see how much more than this she is in the finest shot in the film. After Jonathan and she have made love, the camera stares at her propped blissfully on pillows in three-quarter close-up for about two minutes. It is one of the most memorable images of happiness the cinema has given us, and the credit must go as much to Nichols as to Ann-Margret's incandescent performance.

She plays the hesitant blank Bobbie with a truthfulness which seems to owe as much to instinct as to art. Unlike, say, Marilyn Monroe or even Judy Holliday (whom one could imagine in the part), she is neither comic nor poignant—the performance is the thing itself, the picture and process of love destroyed by inanition. She cannot cook or housekeep; is subject to the nameless shames of idleness; is in love and wants to get married. She is quite unaware of the emotional and psychological illness of Jonathan, whom she loves, and is driven to attempted suicide in the belief that it is she who is wholly inadequate.

There are even worse indignities and distresses to come in the two final sequences. The first is a slide lecture of his sexual conquests given by Jonathan to Sandy and his new hippie girl friend: Sandy is now a middle-aged love-child, moustachioed and humourless, but still recognisably the loving man, who attempts to convert Jonathan from his cynicism. Finally we follow Jonathan to a flat where Louise (Rita Moreno) ministers to Jonathan's potency, singing his praises after she has formally extracted a hundred-dollar bill from him in a wager that she cannot make him get an erection. His eyes are closed as he feels it coming on, the picture dissolves to the image of the white girl spinning on the ice. End.

So: money and narcissistic delusion are the last gratification to the unloving. It is a whimperingly melodramatic end to an ambitious, clever and deeply confused film. *Carnal Knowledge* is made with the art that parades art, rather than conceals it, and sometimes to exceptional effect. Like Nichols' other films (especially *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *The Graduate*), there is a real sense of hatred at the centre. In the adaptation of the Albee play it was marriage, and in the later film it was the middle-aged in the person of Mrs. Robinson. Now it is sex, love and life itself that are pilloried with remorseless sophistication. Perhaps it is the explicitness of the dialogue and gestures, perhaps the excellence of the performances, which is making the film such an enormous success in the United States. It would

be alarming indeed if it is the vision. One does not look forward to a spate of films made in the wake of *Carnal Knowledge*. It is certainly not a mere tear-jerker void of honesty—but there are a great number of motives left to know.

JULIAN JEBB

King Lear

'We are looking at life in cold countries,' Peter Brook said during work on his first adaptation of Shakespeare for the screen. Made on location in snowbound Denmark, with a Danish crew and Danish extras, Brook's film is a quintessential Dark Ages vision of *King Lear* (Columbia), an extension of his fur, leather and steel production at Stratford in 1962 (from which he has carried over four of his principal actors, Scofield, Worth, Webb and Fleming), and a further attempt to embody the play's classic antitheses—hard/soft, nature/nurture, natural/unnatural, madness/reason—in terms of palpable, corporeal images. The castles he has found for Albany and Gloucester are small, plain, ill-furnished forts stuck on icy hillsides; the clothes are functional armour against the weather. 'Reason' in Brook's vision of the play is as spare and vulnerable an oasis in a world of animalism or madness as the trappings of primitive civilisation are in a world terrorised by the elements.

Though not tied to any specific epoch or culture, the film's period reconstruction is solid enough to serve as an analogue, not merely a symbolic backcloth, to the internal conflicts of

speeches, this approach to the play binds Lear's immediate court circle in a convincing intimacy.

The stress on naturalism was evident in the Stratford production. What makes the film a distinct achievement is Brook's exploration of Shakespeare through intrinsically cinematic modes. Where, on stage, he used the bare bones of theatrical illusion as a correlative for the play's concrete primitivism—thunder sheets suspended over the stage for the storm scene—he here makes use of the camera's technical tricks both to undermine and to transcend representationalism. Expression is not confined within a safe illusionistic frame but released (as in Bergman's recent films) into the workings of the medium itself. In the storm, two separate close-ups of Lear's face are rapidly cross-cut to the rhythm of the lightning flashes. The schizoid visual pattern, like the unnerving sequence of fades to whiteness in the hovel scene, becomes part of the external assault on Lear.

The other aesthetic gain is the increased mobility of location. Apart from the first and last acts, *Lear* is a play of non-stop travel, a kind of madman's odyssey beginning with a royal progress and ending in the convergence of two dispossessed old men on the edge of the sea. (The Beckettian analogies have been noted before by Kott—they are invoked by Brook not only in the casting of Jack MacGowran as the Fool but in two striking wide-angle shots which isolate Lear and Gloucester as they gibber comfort to each other on a vast deserted beach.) Fragments of the early scenes are taken out of ante-rooms and courtyards and put into moving coaches (Lear's cross-talk act with the Fool,



'Carnal Knowledge': Jack Nicholson, Arthur Garfunkel

the play. During the credits, Brook's camera tracks laterally along a Brueghel-like sea of heads turned expectantly towards Lear's throne-room. The shot establishes at once the period and the political moment, and further gives the reality of a populated kingdom to a scene that can seem too easily like a power ritual played out in limbo. This early Britain is peopled, its royal decisions do affect flesh-and-blood subjects. At the same time, expanding the perspective both ways, Brook's direction transforms the tone of the speeches from the standard, post-Wolfit declamatory style to a persuasive person-to-person urgency, so that the Kent-Lear quarrel in scene one ('Come not between the dragon and his wrath') and Lear's later curse on Goneril become confidential exchanges between familiars. Apart from the novel sensation of seeing the characters actually talk to each other, rather than take turns to recite

Gloucester's speech 'These late eclipses of the sun and moon . . .') or conversations on foot. The play itself is thus radically re-ordered (and, at a rough guess, shorn of half its written length), partly to simplify the narrative—Gloucester's intrigue is put after the scenes in Goneril's castle—and partly to reduce the verbiage: the reported deaths in Act Five are replaced by the real thing (though Goneril's suicide, swaying herself serpent-like into a trance and then crashing her head on a rock, seems a fanciful elaboration of Shakespeare's simple 'And after slew herself'). Other changes are made to create a stronger counterpoint between word and image: most effectively, Gloucester's 'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods' is spoken, voice off, over a long shot of Edgar and Gloucester stumbling pathetically across a frozen marsh.

As an experience, though, Brook's film is far

more than the sum of its variations on the original. Visually, it matches Kozintsev's *Hamlet* (his *Lear* is still unseen in this country) not only in Henning Christiansen's bleakly atmospheric black-and-white photography but in its thrilling use of real locations. Histrionically, it probably improves on the Olivier films: Scofield, Irene Worth and Alan Webb, while giving full value to the emotional momentum of the verse, have softened their stage personalities to harmonise with period and mood. Most importantly, though, it shows that what we previously accepted as 'cinematic' Shakespeare—chiaroscuro and elaborate camera movement à la Welles' *Macbeth*—was decorative and fluid enough, but went only half the way towards rethinking Shakespeare's structure and imagery in filmic terms.

NIGEL ANDREWS

The Touch

Bergman has described *The Touch* (Cinerama) as an everyday story about a middle-class housewife, a mild enough introduction which from most other directors would cause the heart to sink, but which in his case one may justifiably receive with caution. After all, *The Shame* and *A Passion* were seemingly about average individuals, and their experiences turned out to be anything but everyday; on this evidence, brainstorms and savagery are the least we could expect from Bergman's middle-class characters. And *The Touch* doesn't let us down—or Bergman. It tells how Karin Vergérus, loyal wife and industrious mother in a home of comfortable modernity, gives way without a struggle to the amorous declarations of a boorishly unreliable friend, and unable to choose between him and her husband, loses them both. Or rather, at the end of the film she appears to have lost them both. For it is the ambiguity in *The Touch* that places it firmly in line, despite the innovations (English dialogue, American actor in the lead, and an absence of fantasy sequences), with Bergman's recent work.

As usual, one looks first to the names for a guide to Bergman's motives, and as usual they are full of hints. Vergérus is instantly familiar: the inflexible husband of *A Passion*, the aloof, self-satisfied analyst of *The Face* who (the echoes grow stronger) is severely shaken by the brooding, black-bearded guest he had so contemptuously dismissed. One recalls, too, the words of Bibi Andersson, here Mrs. Vergérus for the second time, when she said of her part in *A Passion*: 'I hope she's saved. I hope when she wakes up she will have gone through something that frees her from herself.' And Mrs. Vergérus, formerly Eva, has now become Karin, the name of Max von Sydow's schizophrenic wife in *Through a Glass Darkly* and of the same Max von Sydow's daughter, arrogant and doomed, in *The Virgin Spring*. The pattern is so outrageously consistent (for Karin is raped again, body and mind, in *The Touch*), that when the name of Jacobi is casually mentioned by a receptionist the hollow-eyed image of Björnstrand in *The Shame* comes promptly to mind—as Bergman undoubtedly intended, jokingly, that it should.

These recurrent signposts are a particularly helpful warning in *The Touch* that the security of the married couple, and later the personality of the adulterous wife, aren't as straightforward as they appear to be. For it is the wildly erratic behaviour of Karin's lover that captures the attention as he smashes the furniture because she's a few minutes late or her hair smells of cigarette smoke. As with *A Passion*, the obvious neuroses of one character serve at first to obscure but ultimately to bring out the deeper sickness of the other. Despite appearances, it's Karin who's in trouble, far more than the almost childlike innocent whom she has to goad into making love to her. His tantrums, one gradually



'The Touch': Bibi Andersson, Elliott Gould

realises, are caused by her inconsistencies, her inability to give fully, and her incessant, vague deceptions.

Uncharacteristically using a pre-credit sequence, Bergman gives us most of the clues right away; we need only interpret a little. Karin's white car, ambulance-like, arrives through a garden thick with flowers at the clinic where her mother has just died. She studies the corpse calmly, surrounded by the few inconsequential possessions that belonged to its life; it is only when her mother's rings are given to her, now so potentially meaningless, that Karin breaks down. Marriage offers no immunity against death—on the contrary, the two are closely identified. She weeps in the gloom of a cubicle, a coffin-shaped corner of darkness suddenly intruded upon by a man who switches on the light and falls in love with her on the instant. We later learn that, logically enough, he is an archaeologist, a specialist in the art of unearthing forgotten places, things, people (there is a fade at one point, just on the edge of being over-wrought, from Karin's head to the skull from which her lover is brushing the earth). At a tiny derelict church outside the town he has discovered a long-lost statue of the Madonna; but with its restoration comes the awakening of insects in its wood that will destroy it. Bergman doesn't belabour the metaphor, but it's clear enough.

Droning away at their roughcast, slightly tipsy guest, Vergérus shows countless slides of moribund family life ('That was a donkey—it's dead now. That was my wife's mother—er, she's dead too . . .'), of his flowers, and of his 'most beautiful orchid', his wife. The sense of a sheltered, hot-house existence is perfectly conveyed, and throughout the film Bergman preserves the contrast between the wistful colours of the flowers (often dominating his interior foregrounds) and the icy bleakness of the excavation site dusted with snow. Karin pleads time and again to be kept warm, and her final meeting with her lover is in a greenhouse; the artificiality of her existence is neatly underscored. But she is also trapped, unable to tolerate any longer the claustrophobic stability of her marriage, unable to survive in the terrifying world outside it (made the more inhospitable by the unnerving encounter with her lover's sister in his starkly unfurnished London flat). The camera pulls back at the end of *The Touch*, as it did for *A Passion*, to reveal a pathetic figure lost in indecision.

Bergman's use of English in the film reveals a further dimension, which subtitles may previously have obscured. Talking incessantly at each other in immense monologues like un-

solicited confessions, the characters speak in stumbling platitudes, formula phrases that pour out in desperate torrents as if there might be, somewhere in the flow, a flash of instant truth. 'One day I stopped dead in my tracks,' Elliott Gould observes straight into the camera, 'and said to myself: "we're painfully united".' Later, pleading with his mistress to make the final break with her husband, he shrieks an anguished succession of romantic clichés, recognising their cheapness as he does so: 'I didn't know it would be like this . . . I wanted to make a clean break . . . I can't live without you . . . It's true, I can't express it any better way . . .'

Whether or not Gould was confident that he could match up to Bergman's expectations of him, his nervous, glowering and unselfish performance makes an ideal opposite to the brittle poise of Bibi Andersson, rapidly becoming a very great actress indeed. Her finely gauged portrait of the gradual onset of paranoia, conveyed with the delicacy of an eye movement or the pursing of just the corner of the mouth, has a subtlety that almost defeats Bergman at his own game. What the director chooses to convey by dangerously overloading his soundtrack with the grind of a sawmill or the multi-purpose racket of bell-chimes, Bibi Andersson can put across simply by lying on the floor or standing in desolate silhouette by an open door. Her everyday story becomes the purest essence of tragedy.

PHILIP STRICK

The Ballad of Joe Hill

The key line in *The Ballad of Joe Hill* (British Lion) is the slogan of the militant factory girls who want both bread and roses. This is socialism as Bo Widerberg, here and in *Adalen* '31, would like to see it: strength (in his own context) through joy, labour and lyricism. At the end of the film, we follow Joe Hill's corpse to the crematorium, see the ashes ground out, watch his friends packing up little parcels of his ashes to send out to allies around the country. But there is a dance going on in the building where they're working, and they leave their sombre duty to join in.

'I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night . . .' But it would be hard, really, to dream of Widerberg's Joe Hill, for all the invigorating and likeable qualities of Thommy Berggren's performance. He is, essentially, the Widerberg socialist hero as a young man, as we have met him already in *Raven's End* and *Adalen*: pleasant, somewhat withdrawn, essentially simple. He wanders America, sees poverty and labour troubles, decides in a splendid scene that the Salvation Army shouldn't have all the best songs, and writes one for the young labour movement. He remains a friendly innocent, sweet singer of the I.W.W., a bonny fighter, the hero as it were of his own ballad. But wasn't there rather more than this to Joe Hill; and a bit more toughness about the International Workers of the World?

The opening of Widerberg's film is as fresh and attractive as anything he has done: the arrival of the Hillstrom brothers on an immigrant ship from Sweden, the struggles to learn English and find work, the solemn excursions into the city and the language, the friendships struck up with a Dickensian street urchin and with the music-loving girl who sits out on the cold fire-escape at night listening to the sounds of the opera house. It is as though Widerberg is re-creating here the view of America he must have assembled from American novels read in childhood: familiar but fresh, the kind of slightly dreamy past that one assimilates from the books of foreign countries.

Later, the picaresque biography extends the same territory: Joe Hill rides the rails, joins the hobo community, carries his bundle of belongings across the continent. He finds temporary

work on a cosy little farm, looks like settling down with the woman of the house; and, as abruptly and in the context somewhat inexplicably, moves on again. The early New York scenes seem to be establishing links and connections, but as the film progresses it becomes increasingly episodic, snatches from a life story rather than the full life itself. We are hardly brought any closer to the central character, hardly aware of any thought processes more complex than those sketched in the first sequences.

As the picture darkens towards its conclusion, the martyrdom of the folk hero, Widerberg leans even more heavily on purely emotive and pictorial connections. Joe Hill is charged with a seemingly improbable, motiveless murder. A frame-up? He refuses to explain how he himself came to be wounded, or to produce the alibi that might have saved him. And Widerberg, in an admitted piece of invention, resurrects the girl from the opera house fire-escape, who had long since gone off with an Italian tenor, and hints by implication that Joe Hill was protecting her name and that the wound was acquired in some encounter with a jealous lover. This old-fashioned fiction (rather more Victorian, actually, than the period in which the film is set) may complete the image of the chivalrous idealist; but it stretches credibility somewhat further than some people may be prepared to follow. Perversely, it may leave cynics feeling that if *this* is the best case Widerberg can put up for the defence, Joe Hill's innocence still remains to be proved.

This is the problem Widerberg creates for himself, as he did to a lesser extent in *Adalen*, with his deliberately anti-intellectual approach. There is one, rare moment in the film when one of the union men suggests that Joe Hill may serve the cause better as a martyr than he does alive. But otherwise this is the history of the American labour movement wafted on a haze of romanticism, in which the appeal of the camerawork, the likeability of the actor, the vigour of individual scenes, are deployed as though they could be trusted to present a case which needs no further elucidation, no mental stiffening. It's ironic that Widerberg should be celebrating these primitive battles of unionism at a time when it is the all-powerful unions who are themselves seen in so many areas—not only Britain—as agents of reaction. And if Widerberg wanted to recall them to a sense of their original purpose, somehow picaresque sentimentalising hardly seems the way to do it. A conscious naiveté can look like arrogance: it leaves the director at least in an uncommonly exposed position. In *Adalen* '31 I think that Widerberg brought it off, in spite of some sticky passages, because the film had a consistent validity within the terms it established for itself. *Joe Hill* seems to depend increasingly, in the scenes of the bludgeoning attacks on the workers, and Joe Hill's own trial and execution, on assuming set emotive responses in the audience to set situations. Too many roses, one could say, and not enough bread.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Bed and Board

Where *Baisers Volés* was essentially a celebration of capriciousness—of ephemeral relationships between unique but emphatically temporary beings repeatedly sidetracked by life's infinite chances—*Bed and Board* (Columbia), the last of Truffaut's films in the Antoine Doinel cycle, is ultimately an apology for staying in the same place. Which may perhaps explain its air of rather laboured humour and intermittently forced charm. Truffaut's strength has always been in depicting revolt, not reconciliation; and even though the larger part of his film (more aptly titled *Domicile Conjugal* in the original French) deals with Antoine's attempts to escape the domestic hearth, the conclusion towards

which Truffaut is slowly moving him casts a somewhat restrictive shadow over the entire proceedings.

In the long run, people are shown to be not so much uniquely interesting as equally limited: the occupants of the courtyard over which the newly-wed Doinels reside may, to the casual observer, offer an impressive range of idiosyncrasies, but on closer acquaintance they prove entirely predictable; like the temper tantrums of Antoine's next-door neighbour, you can even set your watch by them. From boasting to his understandably restless wife that he is never bored, Antoine will, through an affair with an appropriately inscrutable Oriental, learn what it means to be bored rigid and return to the marital routine as infinitely the lesser of two evils. The sad thing is that, along with the character he has nursed and created, Truffaut too seems to be running out of energetic improvisation and to have discovered the meaning of boredom.

On one level, *Domicile Conjugal* is an elaboration of the anecdote from the opening sequence of *Tirez sur le Pianiste*, of the man who fell in love with his wife two years after he married her; and a feeling that Truffaut is dotting the i's on his old ideas rather than developing new ones hovers uneasily throughout the film, which all too frequently does no more than make explicit elements which were already dramatically evident in *Baisers Volés*. When Antoine confides in a former colleague from S.O.S., whom a tidy chance encounter has thrown across his path, that it wasn't Christine (Claude Jade) but her entire family with whom he fell in love, or when he later tells a secretary at work that his initial infatuation was with Christine's middle-class manners, the only novelty in these revelations is a degree of self-awareness which the rest of the narrative seems at some pains to belie. The analytic Antoine, aspiring novelist and autobiographer, combines uneasily with the Antoine of childish impulses and enthusiasms, engrossed in his successive employments as carnation-dyer and manipulator of model boats. Truffaut appears to have equal difficulty in bringing his nostalgically reconstructed character into the estate of manhood and into thoroughly modern times.

It is not just a question of Jean-Pierre Léaud having outgrown his role as Truffaut's adolescent *alter ego*, though there are traces of anxiety and disillusionment in his characterisation quite

beyond anything called for in the script. Where the film really comes to grief is in its attempts to satirise the stresses and strains of life in the Seventies with techniques and attitudes imperfectly borrowed from Jean Renoir. The courtyard (a miscalculated homage to *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*) echoes with complaints about pollution, plastic dustbins, school strikes and astronauts, whose very topicality jars with the wilfully poetic realism of the simplified 'characters' and setting. Though not particularly amusing, the visual reference to Monsieur Hulot appears entirely appropriate, but the jokey references to Truffaut's own films seem more heavily contrived. By the time the young Doinels switch on the television to discover their sinister Hitchcockian neighbour in an unlikely impersonation of Delphine Seyrig in both *Marienbad* and *Baisers Volés*, it's hard not to feel that Truffaut is casting his net desperately wide or to echo Christine's view that it takes more than autobiography to make a work of art.

Where the film works best (and that is very well indeed) is when Truffaut, without looking directly over his shoulder, is developing one of his favourite themes: the uses and abuses of language. Antoine's disenchantment with the exotic Kyoko is economically charted through a series of enforcedly rather silent meals in which his fascination with all her Oriental ritual is seen to turn, first to discomfort and then to anger. Exoticism proves a shortlived substitute for wordplay, and after spending a good many evenings cross-legged on the floor and trying to overcome his embarrassment at Kyoko sending him flowers or offering to commit suicide with him, Antoine is soon reaching for the telephone to communicate in his native French with his unexotic wife, ready to agree with the secretary who has confided in him that she'd marry a lamp-post if only it could make conversation.

But though Antoine springs from time to time into gratuitous life (announcing that Mother's Day is a Nazi invention, dubbing his wife's asymmetrical breasts Laurel and Hardy, celebrating her pregnancy with a 'Childbirth without Pain' record, and destroying buckets of carnations in his search for the 'Absolute Red'), *Domicile Conjugal* on the whole seems more concerned with continuity and tidying up loose ends than with the sheer inconsequential vitality of its characters. Christine and the habitués of the courtyard have in common a predictable charm to which Antoine—last seen

Death by firing squad in 'The Ballad of Joe Hill'





'Domicile Conjugal': Jean-Pierre Léaud and carnations

impatiently pacing the corridor in imitation of his next-door neighbour—is in the end reduced. Truffaut's films have always been more concerned with hopeful travelling than with arrival, and when Antoine explains to a prostitute, 'Je deteste tout ce qui finit, tout ce qui se termine . . .', it could seem that he's never come closer to speaking for his creator.

JAN DAWSON

The Red Baron

There is a classic Corman moment in *The Red Baron* (United Artists) when Baron Manfred von Richthofen, a novice pilot fresh from rebuke by his squadron-leader for having staggered in to a three-bounce landing, takes the first step to becoming an ace by making his first kill. As soon as he lands, he leaps into a car, drives out to the crashed British plane, and removes the goggles from the pilot, still sitting upright at the controls, to stare for a moment into the dead, grime-encircled eyes. Then, almost tenderly, he replaces the goggles and, like a hunter skinning his prey, cuts the British insignia from the fabric of the plane.

What exactly von Richthofen (John Phillip Law) sees in those eyes remains the enigma of the film. 'Do you want to remember your first kill?' asks his squadron-leader when he returns with his trophy. 'Yes,' replies von Richthofen, 'but I don't know what victory is all about.' For the squadron-leader, as for his opposite number, the gentlemanly Hawker, there is no doubt: 'It's for remembering the men you killed.' At heart, this is what *The Red Baron* is all about: the passing of an era, superbly exemplified by two planes weaving lazy circles round each other in the sky until one spirals crazily downwards leaving the other to sketch a salute to a gallant adversary, when war could still be considered as a chivalrous combat between brave men.

Not for nothing was the film originally called *Von Richthofen and Brown*. At one extreme is von Richthofen, the ruthless military machine, trained to kill with faultless efficiency. At the other, Roy Brown (Don Stroud), the Canadian wheat farmer, earthy and pragmatic, who does not play cricket, who refuses to join his British fellow-pilots in toasting 'a gallant enemy', and for whom the best war is the one that is ended quickest. The opposition is simple, and borne out by the facts of the First World War as it escalated from individual combat to an embryonic version of total destruction. But Corman's

heroes are not quite so clear-cut as they seem: for if von Richthofen is haunted by the mysterious personal revelation of those dead eyes, Brown for his part is equally haunted by the fact that in his war, the total war he has helped to create, killing is so indiscriminate that there is no 'remembering the men you killed'.

On the surface at least, as the last shot of the film indicates, von Richthofen is seeing his own death mirrored in the dead British pilot's eyes; and the whole film literally bristles with intimations of his death, culminating in the strangely tranquil sequence where he strolls with his father through the formal gardens of the family estate, listening neutrally as they pause in a graveyard and the old man explains how after the war things will be as they were before, after the army has rooted out 'these socialist elements'. Von Richthofen, his family, his ideals, his traditions, all are anachronistic survivals, soon to become extinct, and it does not really need the signpost of his self-description: 'My ancestors were Teutonic knights; I merely exchanged the horse for the aeroplane,' to place him as an archetypal Corman hero, marooned (whether by circumstance or by his own intelligence) between two time planes and assailed by demons from the past or the future.

Von Richthofen himself, since he knows he must inevitably die anyway, refuses to look either back or forwards, and acknowledges only the present: 'Every moment I'm in the air with these Spandaus in my hands—that's forever.' It is left to two casual, understated shots to illuminate by association (perhaps inadvertently) the *danse macabre* glimpsed behind the dead man's eyes. One is the shot of the toy carousel which von Richthofen remembers being given as a child as he lies delirious in hospital after being shot down the first time, and which recalls the accusing carousel of *The Trip* and the mysterious, black-cowled inquisitors who pursue Peter Fonda in his conscience. The other is of von Richthofen's brother, wounded in the British bombing attack on the German airfield which presages the new era of warfare, and limping away from the destruction with one boot soaked bright red with blood exactly like Stewart Granger's in *The Secret Invasion*.

No one removes von Richthofen's goggles as he sits dead at the controls of his plane in a green and grassy field at the end of the film. But behind them, surely, lie echoes of the black-cowled demons of *The Trip*, of Stewart Granger dying in the forest clearing like Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied*, and perhaps of another hooded monk (Henry Silva in *The Secret Invasion*)

making a last, desperate gesture to wipe the horrors of war from his own 'dead eyes'. All this, admittedly, is reading between the lines, but if von Richthofen manages to guard the secret of his feelings to the end, they are revealed, contrapuntally as it were, through Brown and the cruel little scene of his encounter with the French girl. Where von Richthofen's sexual encounter (as Fokker describes the beauty and superior destructive power of the new aircraft he has designed, a girl drapes herself provocatively over it, and von Richthofen calmly appraises both beauties at once) is stamped with the chill of death, cold and yet somehow human in its toneless eroticism, Brown's is a betrayal of the Garden of Eden. In a little French farmyard set in an apple orchard on a summer's day, Brown suddenly sees a ravishing young girl at an upper window. Delightedly he signals her to come down, and as she does she reveals that she has only one leg. Three aircraft fly overhead, and Brown suddenly extricates himself from his mesmerised horror: 'I must go . . . you understand?'

Obviously the girl understands all too well; but though Brown recoils from the horrors of mutilation, he still sets in motion the processes which will shower such mutilations on innocent bystanders. Only later does he come to understand the rules by which von Richthofen lives, and which Hawker tried to explain to him when he refused to drink to the enemy: 'Men can be enemies without becoming beasts.' Or as Brown himself later translates it into a Corman formula, 'We have to pretend to go mad' to avoid really going mad.

Corman hasn't exactly chosen the easiest path for himself in making a film where not only the psychological conflicts, but the physical ones are interiorised. There are no dogfights conventionally staged for aerial excitements. Instead, stunning shots of the lazy, gaily-painted biplanes and triplanes leave them hovering remote, detached from each other, until the appointed time comes for them to spiral to earth like Tennessee Williams' mythical wingless bird. Up there, one feels—and it is an impression fostered by the opening shot of von Richthofen's plane running wild and free as it skims a startled horse in a field, and by the final, interminable suspension of time before the dead von Richthofen comes to earth in a field—men may be locked in combat, but it is down below that madness lies.

TOM MILNE

Gimme Shelter

Inevitably, *Gimme Shelter* (Fox) will be regarded by many people as a kind of ironic sequel to last summer's *Woodstock*. It concerns the Rolling Stones' eventful 1969 tour of America, and in particular their notorious free concert at Altamont speedway, where violence repeatedly broke out among the crowd, and a Hell's Angel eventually knifed a man to death. The killing was by chance photographed by one of the film cameramen and this footage was later used as evidence in court, where the accused was acquitted on grounds of self-defence after the film revealed that his victim carried a gun.

The Maysles brothers have certainly constructed their film so that this killing forms its climax, but to describe *Gimme Shelter* as an almost calculated rejoinder to *Woodstock* is I think seriously to underestimate it. *Woodstock* offered an overlong and repetitive view of its subject, concentrating above all on the size and grandeur of the event, while attempting to construct some kind of message as a result of it. *Gimme Shelter* on the other hand is more interested in the differing responses of the people involved, and it has the opportunity of observing their reactions to a situation of Faust-like dimensions that developed over a relatively short period of time.

Because of the lack of preparation and the usual distribution of adulterated drugs, Altamont seems to have disintegrated into a kind of caricature of a pop festival, where all the usual negative and positive emotions were heightened into a frenzied, dreamlike madness. The material of the crowd, which the film-makers have managed to shoot, is often so stunning that it's difficult to resist the impression that one is watching a generation being tested by all the various demons (drugs, revolution, etc.) of their own creation. And not all of them come out of the ordeal badly: 'Keep your bodies off each other unless you intend love,' pleads Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane, and most of the audience seem to be trying to obey as baffled cries of 'Why are we fighting?' go unanswered.

In fact, contrary to all expectation, *Gimme Shelter* communicates better than any other pop festival film the poignant desperate hopefulness of the occasion, as well as the helplessness of so many caught up in it. The naked bodies passed over the heads of the crowd for medical attention, Jagger attempting first confidently and then with bewilderment to stop the confused fighting, girls looking on in terrified incomprehension, all these images create rather than alienate sympathy. There is no suggestion in the film, as there is in its rather offensive publicity, that this was the day '300,000 young Americans went wild'. The faces we are shown span many emotions from gentleness to sheer hatred and, together with the apocalyptic tone of birth and death, they are less reminiscent of a pop jamboree than of some kind of overwrought religious vision, Langland's 'fair field full of

folk'. As in that account of tormented humanity, various extremes of innocence and corruption are presented in lurid detail, and there is an overpowering menace in surreal touches like Jagger locked in nervous conversation with a Hell's Angel wearing an animal's head, or the music again and again being brought to a weird cacophonous halt by fresh outbreaks of violence.

Certainly there are moments, especially at the beginning of the film, where the Maysles brothers' extremely rigid construction becomes suspect and irritating. The killing itself is wisely set up in cinematic inverted commas on a moviola, in the slow-motion blow-up that one assumes was shown as evidence. But it's difficult to see how anyone can defend the sequence of the victim's girl in a state of hysteria as she waits to hear if he has been killed. And there are certain unnecessary attempts at irony in the selection of observers' comments prior to the event ('It's an amazing phenomenon, like the lemmings and the sea,' etc.).

Despite this, the Altamont footage, building as it does to a kind of ritual sacrifice, finally amounts to a definitive record of the hippie experience, exploring both its vulnerable hedonistic idealism and its terrifying capacity for self-destruction. The Hell's Angels have convincingly cast themselves as demons (there is an unforgettable shot of one staring with pure inexplicable hatred at Mick Jagger), and Jagger himself fits into the schema with appropriate ambiguity, performing compellingly aggressive rock but preaching non-violence with little success. It is the agonising tension in his musical personality, in his audience and in the whole



'The Red Baron': John Phillip Law

pop mythos which this uniquely disturbing film captures. *Gimme Shelter* is easily the most important result so far of the fusion between *cinéma-vérité* (in its loosest sense) and pop music. It is in effect a documentary postscript not to *Woodstock* but to *Performance*.

DAVID PIRIE

BOOK REVIEWS

NEGATIVE SPACE

By Manny Farber

PRAEGER PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK, \$7.95
STUDIO VISTA, LONDON, £2.75

Manny Farber is an American painter who's been writing on the movies for a variety of journals for the past thirty years. His best writing—his American admirers would call it his seminal work—was done in the Forties and Fifties, but the bulk of this selection dates from the 1960s. His style is altogether individual: a hard-driving amalgam of slang, wisecracks, racy imagery, art terminology. Sometimes I find him difficult to understand both sentence by sentence and in his general drift, but then he makes a similar charge about the language and soundtracks of British films, and demonstrates it by hearing Michael Hordern's ex-Indian army officer in *How I Won the War* refer to 'the wily Patton' instead of 'the wily Pathan'.

Clearly something of a loner, with a built-in suspicion of the prestigious, ambitious and arty, Farber has two great strengths. One is his vigorous espousal of the

ignored or undervalued Hollywood action picture; the other is the painter's eye through which he filters his impressions. I can think of no other movie critic who draws so effectively or consistently on a knowledge of the visual arts. To these might be added a further strength: a lack of moralising. He never feels impelled to argue that a director he likes is life-enhancing or possessed of an uplifting world-view. Indeed such words as 'rancidness' (to describe a Samuel Fuller hero), 'scummy' (characterising Don Siegel's *The Killers*) and 'funky' (defined by him as 'slangy, sweaty, lowdown') are terms of praise. His favourite Buñuel picture would seem to be *Exterminating Angel*, where the decaying characters eventually 'give off a steam of sweat, ill temper, physical disgust, a remarkable intensity of discomfort that hasn't been seen before in the movies.'

Again and again over the years he returns to a consideration of the use of space, which is the subject of his fine introduction and the source of his title: 'Negative space, the command of experience which an artist can set resonating within a film, is a sense of terrain created

partly by the audience's imagination and partly by camera-actors-director... Negative space assumes the director testing himself as an intelligence against what appears on the screen, so that there is a murmur of poetic action enlarging the terrain of the film, giving the scene an extra-objective breadth. It has to do with flux, movement, and air; always the sense of an artist knowing where he's at: a movie filled with negative space is always a textural work throbbing with acuity.'

The two major articles in the book are his famous defence (or more properly, his celebration) of Hollywood's 'Underground Films' (1957) and its companion piece 'White Elephant Art vs. Termite Art' (1962). By 'Underground Films' at that time he meant the work of Walsh, Hawks, Wellman, Mann, Aldrich *et al*, 'the hard-bitten action film [that] finds its natural home in caves: the murky, congested theatres, looking like glorified tattoo parlours on the outside and located near bus terminals in big cities.'

'At heart, the best action films are slicing journeys into the lower depths of American life,' he says. 'In the films of these hard-edged directors can be found the unheralded ripple of physical experience, the tiny morbidly life-worn detail which the visitor to a strange city finds springing out at every step.' There's a deal of romantic tough-guy sentimentality underlying this now classic essay, but it's a vigorous and engaging piece all the same. In fact, reading Farber can sometimes feel like being buttolled by a fellow-drinker in a beat-up bar and gradually discovering that this hectoring stran-

ger has a lot of fascinating and original things to say.

His 'White Elephant' essay follows on from the earlier one to provide an aesthetic theory for his preferences, his liking for the modest American work that functions by breathing sweaty life into cliché situations, though often intermittent in its success. 'White Elephant Art' is seen by Farber as a fallacious notion that has dogged 20th century art since Cézanne: the ambition to create formal masterpieces, obsessed with grand designs and cluttered with detail. 'Termite Art', on the other hand, 'feels its way through walls of particularisation, with no sign that the artist has any object in mind other than eating away the immediate boundaries of his art, and turning these boundaries into conditions of the next achievement.'

Of the essays on individual directors that are not appendices to 'Underground Films', the best perhaps concerns Preston Sturges, who in Farber's view is misunderstood if approached as a satirist—partly on the grounds that satire is an impossibility in America. Sturges, he argues, was 'an inventive American who believes that good picture-making consists in grinding out ten thousand feet of undiluted chaos-producing energy,' and presented 'with nervous simultaneity' 'the sky-rocketing modern world of highspeed pleasures and actions (money-making, vote-getting, barroom sex and deluxe transportation) in conflict with a whole Victorian world of sentiment, glamour, baroque appearance, and static individuality in a state of advanced decay.'

Other pieces are not so good, and in some of his synoptic articles

plugging away at current preoccupations, such as the lamentable decline of narrative cinema, the sorry influence of *Citizen Kane* on the post-war films of Stevens and Wyler, boredom in the movies, he can drive his point into the ground and continue to hammer away after it's long out of sight. Occasionally too his bad jokes are so bad that they obscure the good ones. Somebody should have told him how infantile he sounds when referring to 'Monica Unvital', 'Jeanne Morose', 'Catherine Dead-nerve' and 'Jean Pee Loud'.

Yet everywhere there are nice observations: about for example the decline of the subversive, free-wheeling bit-player in the over-directed, over-schematised modern Hollywood movie. And in a few lines on 'the virile ribbon image' of *The Wild Bunch*, 'the snap-the-whip, across-the-page compositions that Homer often used as a perfect substructure for the spread-out, pastoral, early 1900s,' he gracefully illuminates the pictorial style of Peckinpah's movie. I was also glad to see three pages from the end, in one of his most recent essays, 'an overdue plug for Jane Greer' casually tossed into a paragraph about *Viridiana*.

PHILIP FRENCH

TWENTY-FOUR TIMES A SECOND

By William Pechter

HARPER AND ROW, \$7.95

William S. Pechter's avowed preference, one which I share, is for the impure, pluralistic film, neither the photographed play nor the self-conscious attempt to confine cinema to its supposed 'unique attributes'. For the critic this kind of film is still a puzzle. We are close to the theatre in *Les Parents Terribles*, to the novel in *L'Avventura*, to the essay in *Le Petit Soldat*, and yet we feel that we have in each case a masterpiece of film. The richness and complexity, the dazzling impurity of *La Règle du Jeu*, the peculiar combination we get in that film of the theatrical and the documentary, of novelistic observation, painterly sensuousness, and a musical sense of form, do not seem to belong far out to the edge of the possibilities of the medium (as *Ulysses*, for example, seems with respect to the novel) but rather to constitute one of its central achievements. But why, precisely, do we feel this about Renoir's film and not about such a fine and somewhat similar picture as *Les Enfants du Paradis*? To say that Renoir moves his camera more than Carné, or that his shots have greater depth of field, is beside the point. Technique doesn't matter in itself but only as it is put to an expressive end.

The essays collected in *Twenty-Four Times a Second* were written on different occasions over the past ten years. They are none of them theoretical; none broadly comprehensive except for a long piece against many of the textbook classics and received notions;

nearly all are about specific films (*A Bout de Souffle*, *8½*, *The Wild Bunch*) or film-makers (Ford, Welles, Bergman, Godard, Satyajit Ray). Yet they cohere into a larger unity and make, taken together, not a scrap heap but a real book. They constitute a sustained endeavour—one of the few that I know which does not in one way or another shirk that difficult job—to come to grips critically with the impure film.

William Pechter is everywhere engaged with the problem of film content and the elusive and complex means by which it is expressed. The delights of connoisseurship are not for him. He wants to know what a film means, how its technique is made to communicate its meaning—how, for example, a successful Hollywood entertainer like Capra can manage to say much more than he consciously aims to; or a Godard film, essentially a patchwork, hold together by the interplay of abstract ideas; or Fellini, for all his redundancies, work at his best through allusion and the obliqueness of metaphor.

The brilliant technique of Resnais and Eisenstein is for him not enough. Eisenstein's formalist montage, he finds, '... unyieldingly constricts and diminishes the materials on which he imposes it.' And in Resnais' films, he argues, for all their rigorous control over their craft, what is lacking is control over their subject; there is a kind of neurotic intimacy between the artist and his material. One need not agree with these judgments (as I do) to see that Pechter poses the right questions; if you think Eisenstein is a great artist you cannot just talk about his experiments with protracted time or the way he makes stone lions appear to move.

And when Pechter comes to discuss film-makers such as Renoir and Buñuel, whom he admires greatly and who are often supposed not to care very much about matters of style, he is no more ready to separate their content from their form. On Renoir he begins by arguing against the common view of that director as the maker of warm yet formless films, 'discursive anecdotes in affirmation of life,' and on behalf of his formal mastery and the great beauty of his self-effacing style; after which he looks more closely at *Boudu* and at *Le Caporal Épinglé*, attempting (not, to my mind, wholly successfully) to link their stylistic operation with the theme of individual freedom in conflict with the demands of community. And the essay on Buñuel shows that the distinctive coolness of his films is not, any more than the warmth of Renoir's, the product of careless technique; that it is, like the coolness of Brecht and Bresson, an instance of the transformation of passion through a calculated art.

But I don't wish to make Pechter's essays appear more conclusive than they are. All criticism should be—and film criticism more than any since it

still knows so little—a tentative, a provisional enterprise. Pechter may often rail against other critics (too often, I think, though sometimes, as in the essays on Buñuel and Godard, correcting the misconceptions of others serves him admirably to develop his own views), yet his polemical tone and occasional shrillness doesn't prevent his criticism from being, at bottom, not high-handed but modest and inquiring. Everywhere in his work we sense him grappling with his subject, working out his argument rather than giving us answers that he knew beforehand. And he is aware that, unlike the critic of painting or the novel, he doesn't have behind him, to draw upon in his endeavour, a significant body of criticism in his own field. The film critic must turn for support to some of the criticism that has been done on the other arts.

Yet this is a risky course. For a film is not a painting and it is not a novel and one mustn't ask it to be what it is not. It has been complained of Pechter that his approach is too literary, and it is true that, for example, he treats *L'Avventura* much as one would a novel. But he does not impose on Antonioni's film the standards of another medium. He does not expect it to be like a novel, he finds it to be like one, and tactfully elucidates its novelistic operation for us. How this operation relates to the visuals, to Antonioni's careful pictorial arrangements, he doesn't sufficiently explore; it may be fair to say that he isn't so sensitive to the visual aspect of a film as to the literary; but he always sees the literary and dramatic not as self-contained qualities, academically packaged, but as they enter into and are bound up with the peculiar complexities of film form. It is Pechter's gift—one especially welcome in a film critic—that he tends to open up a subject rather than close it.

GILBERTO PEREZ-GUILLERMO

THE REAL TINSEL

By Bernard Rosenberg and Harry Silverstein

MACMILLAN, NEW YORK, \$9.95

This is the best book for dipping into I have come across in a long time. The two compilers, who are sociologists at the College of the City of New York, had the useful idea of re-creating the atmosphere of pioneering Hollywood by interviewing a selection of 'survivors', from executive producers to directors, cameramen, actors, musicians etc. The resulting tape transcripts are neatly edited to retain the rhythm and idiosyncrasies of individual talkers; and full of marvellous stories of an era when the movies were literally growing up.

Only a few of the artists chosen disappoint. Fritz Lang (coupled, charmingly, under the Directors Section with one William Haddock, a pioneer Western director whose

work is scarcely accessible now) expounds his usual Goebbels and *Fury* stories; but the rest pour out reminiscences like a stream. Few are afflicted by false modesty. Hal Mohr tells how he more or less saved *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from disaster by spraying the sets with aluminium paint. Max Steiner proudly recalls how he got early pit orchestras going before he turned to writing his 250 film scores—'Mahler predicted I was going to be one of the greatest composers that ever lived. Little did he know that I would end up with Warner Brothers.'

The physical excitement of those days still seems very much alive within these speakers: how the first primitive sound systems were perfected (Douglas Shearer); how one just pushed day after day to get a bit part which might lead to bigger things. Mae Marsh, doing her first minuscule role for Griffith, asked, 'When can I do it again?' Griffith, surprised, replied, 'You've done it once, but maybe you can do something else tomorrow.' Coming a little closer to our time, Dore Schary gives a sly account of the in-fighting at M-G-M and elsewhere; and Albert Lewin, in a characteristically civilised chat, reveals how he saw the original fifty-reel *Greed*: 'It took me several days; it was superb, jammed full of symbolism.' Sol Lesser, in a disappointingly sketchy account of his experiences on *Que Viva Mexico!*, recalls that about ninety reels of Eisenstein's uncut film was actually publicly shown in New York.

One tends to feel that so many old movies have been with us all our lives. But Arthur Mayer, in the funniest section of the book, describes how as publicity director for Goldwyn he came across a strange new foreign piece called *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* which, despite being dressed up as 'the daddy of all horror films', flopped so badly that they had to stop showing it to prospective exhibitors.

Charming, revealing portraits and photographs as well: old film studios, location scenes, stills from beautiful-looking totally forgotten silents, a great close-up of Sjöström directing *The Wind* in the Mojave desert, and, perhaps best of all, an unsmiling Stroheim being 'roped' by a cowboy on a street during *Greed*.

Fascinating, too, how the memory of Griffith illumines the years for so many of the contributors: Griffith the teacher, the gentleman artist, the innovator, the sad, forgotten dreamer. Hal Roach, talking about *One Million B.C.*, recalls that Griffith (who was given a minor job on the film) chose Carole Landis for the lead because of all the girls he tested, she ran the best, like a deer. Those last wasted years are recalled by many of Griffith's friends, not least by Mae Marsh in a moving recollection of his death and funeral. To quote Miss Marsh slightly out of context: 'A little bit of Mr. Griffith remains.' That might well be the best subtitle for this rich miscellany.

JOHN GILLET

Letters

The March of Time

SIR,—Those who attended the recent screenings of *The March of Time* at the National Film Theatre must have wondered why, in the June-July programme for NFT 1 and 2, it was stated that 'the editorial slant was right wing,' a charge levelled before in such as Jay Leyda's *Films Beget Films*—'invariably conservative point of view... reactionary slant...'

We were shown reports on the election of 1936, in which the editors' sympathies were clearly with the unemployed who seized the New Jersey State Assembly House in protest at the ending of their dole payments; with John L. Lewis' organisation of the American coalminers, and their British counterparts calling in 1937 for the nationalisation of the industry (*Coalface*, British documentary's contribution to this subject at the time, was politically non-controversial and evaded this fundamental issue altogether); with whites from the north, beaten up by southern racists in Arkansas attempting to smash a union formed by sharecroppers in 1936 demanding a dollar and a half for a ten-hour day; with Fiorello La Guardia's success in breaking the power of Tammany Hall and his efforts to combat corruption as 1938's Mayor of New York City.

International subjects shown in this programme demonstrated the editors' support of Czechoslovakia's defiance of Hitler; their concern for the refugees already pouring out of central Europe and Spain in 1939; their hostility to Mussolini's plan for a Mediterranean empire; and, above all, in *Inside Nazi Germany*, their stand against Hitler when no other film, on any screen in this country, was attacking that character and his policies. The programme, arranged by Lisa Pontecorvo, might have gone on to include *Inside Fascist Spain*, how it was (is) to be in a Franco gaol, released by M.O.T. a few years later; and also *Rehearsal for War* which, in 1937, revealed most movingly how the Spanish War was being used by both Hitler and Mussolini as a testing out of the social democratic countries.

If whoever it was who wrote in those programme notes that 'the editorial slant was right wing' happened to see the programme, perhaps he/she has by now eaten those words (if not as well any as yet uncirculated copies). However, directing as I did international subjects for *The March of Time* from 1946 until its ultimate demise in 1954, I do concede the development of right wing attitudes during those diminishing final years. But

by then the M.O.T. was past its own middle-age, Roosevelt and the New Deal were dead together, and the 'Cold War' was on. The crusading no-holds-barred zeal of *The March of Time* in its early years was being taken up by Ed Murrow and Fred Friendly in their television series *See It Now*.

In its great days, *The March of Time* was no more 'right wing' than the New Deal itself. The only thing that dates these magnificent early issues of its first eight years is their good intentions. To Louis de Rochemont, who pioneered and produced them, all honour; and, please, this belated tribute. (And why, incidentally, was his film *Lost Boundaries* not in the season of 'Blacks in Films'? This was the first American feature film to dramatise the dilemma of the Afro-American in the predominantly white society of the United States. More than twenty years ago de Rochemont set up and made this picture, with his own money, after quitting Hollywood, and in spite of the opposition of every major distributor.)

Neither Paul Rotha nor John Grierson could ever be accused of being 'right wing'. Of *The March of Time* in its early years the first wrote that it 'maintained a high level of screen news-service, and thus presented a unique contribution to the motion picture industry and to the public.' The second claimed it had 'won the field for the elementary principles of public discussion,' and that, as a result, 'our world appears suddenly and brightly as an oyster for the opening: for film people—how strangely—worth living in, fighting in and making drama about.'

Edgar Anstey, who directed at least ten early *March of Times*, including *Black Areas* and *The Refugee—Today and Tomorrow*, which were shown in this recent programme, could have told the writer of the programme notes from his personal experience of two M.O.T. films in 1938-39 which were refused certificates by the British Board of Film Censors because they were critical of a friendly power—Nazi Germany!

We can testify that all concerned in the making of *The March of Time*—producers, editors, researchers, writers, cameramen (if not its magazine-publishing sponsors)—were as fine and committed a body of film-makers as have ever worked together in this field of pictorial journalism.

Why not show some more, and maybe put together a programme tracing the development of reporting news in depth, pioneered on the screen by this original pace-setter?

Yours faithfully,

PETER HOPKINSON

London, S.W.3.

British Film History

SIR,—When we are presented with an expensive volume devoted to a mere ten years in the life of a national film industry, we may perhaps be forgiven for asking of Dr. Rachael Low more than she has in fact given in the fourth

volume of her *History of the British Film*. The book has already been reviewed at length in your columns, so may I merely make one or two observations, confining myself to more fundamental points. These may in fact be related to the continuity in style and organisation of material which links this volume with its predecessors of some twenty years ago. Unfortunately, what was then an important innovation has now been overtaken by a new phase, a new generation even, of film historiography, and what was academically acceptable then is no longer sufficient today.

One's disappointment is twofold. The 1920s saw a number of very important developments, among them the introduction of the film quota legislation, the finalisation of the censorship system, the founding of The Film Society, the coming of sound; and one was expecting to read a thorough exposition, if not analysis, of these events and their causes. But, with the exception of the last, we did not—at least not to a degree adequate to a 'definitive history'. And the reason is almost certainly that Dr. Low has relied too much on the *Bioscope*, while apparently ignoring primary sources other than the register of companies.

Over the past five years a vast amount of official papers have become available to scholars, and the whole period covered by this book has now been released from the 'fifty year rule'. Of particular relevance are the files of the Home Office (for censorship) and the

Board of Trade (for the quota Bill and general economic situation), as well as the Foreign and Colonial Offices, not to mention the valuable archives of the old L.C.C. and the material David Robinson collected on The Film Society for Granada. There is no hint that any of this has been consulted, and the first three chapters consequently give a feeling of superficiality, in spite of the great amount of detailed documentation which has been put into them.

The second disappointment relates to the middle chapters, on production. These contain a prodigious amount of information, albeit largely names and figures, which will be a valuable quarry for later research. Buried there are some most interesting nuggets, but the author does not dig them out. One would dearly have liked her to devote a section to Anglo-German co-operation, for instance, for her chapters abound in tantalisingly laconic references to the use of German studios, the import of German personnel, the making of Anglo-German co-productions. One could indeed carry this further and complain that the British film industry is nowhere adequately placed in either its European or American context, nor even that of the Empire; and this applies to both organisational and commercial matters and to the nature of the films themselves. These are serious defects which detract from the overall value of the work, much to one's distress. It would be nice to think that in her fifth volume

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Dr. Low will avoid her own pitfalls and write a truly definitive history of the British film in the 1930s.

Yours faithfully

NEVILLE HUNNINGS

Purley, Surrey.

Czechoslovakia

SIR,—Having recently visited the Barrandov studios in Prague, I can assure your readers that the situation of Czechoslovakian cinema is just as bad, or maybe even worse, as Mr. Pryl described in the Summer issue of SIGHT AND SOUND.

To his list of banned films, I would like to add a film made for television by Jan Nemec and based upon songs written by his wife. The completed film was never

shown and even its existence is officially denied, though the same officials assure that Mr. Nemec can go back to work as soon as he proposes an 'acceptable' screenplay... It is also typical of the situation in Czechoslovakia that the person who told me about the existence of this film, asked me not to reveal its title.

I am also very doubtful of the affirmation that Mr. Nemec can go back to work any time he wishes to, since of the approximately fifteen directors who have had at least one of their films banned, only five (Jires, Kachyna, Schorm, Uher and Valcanov) have been making any new films since then. Alas, since none of these films can be said to treat of really important subject matter, their directors

might just as well have kept complete silence.

Because this is the image the 'new' Czechoslovak film is creating for itself: films about war, resistance and revolution; films for or about children and pets; horror films, comedies, thrillers, historical biographies, etc., but not a single film about contemporary problems. (Yes, there is one, described as 'a dramatic story of the years 1968-69, showing the origins of certain phenomena of mass-psychosis and the behaviour in this situation of various human characters'; it was written by Rudolf Cerny, but a director still has to be found—or appointed.) With such films, Czechoslovak authorities hope to appeal to what they call 'the large public', which is said to have been 'horrified' by the 'experiments' of the ex-New Wave. Would you believe that when I heard this, I almost felt as if I were talking to some old-time Hollywood tycoon instead of to a socialist film-worker?

Yours faithfully,

Mol, Belgium.

RONNY VOS

Peanuts

SIR,—As a 'Peanuts' fan I am sorry I cannot but write to point out a mistake you have made in the spelling of Schulz, creator of 'Peanuts'. In your Spring issue, 1971, p. 116, actually you have made two mistakes concerning the 'Peanuts' film: it should be *A Boy Named Charlie Brown* instead of *A Boy Called Charlie Brown* and it should be Schulz instead of Schultz.

While the first mistake is nothing we are nevertheless much disturbed by the second. Mr. Charles M. Schulz is almost a god to us, and 'Peanuts' almost a religion. Now we know SIGHT AND SOUND is not a 'Peanuts' fan. And how could you not be one?

Yours faithfully,

ADA LOKE

The Chinese Students Weekly, Hong Kong.

P.S. I am an old 'Peanuts' fan ever since 1957, who now loves François Truffaut even much more than Charles M. Schulz. Happily Truffaut is a name you can't possibly make any mistakes with!

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES IVORY first went to India to work on a documentary, and stayed to make all his four features to date there. Now in his early forties, he has been back this year in America to direct what will be his first American-made feature, *Savages*... ROBERT P. KOLKER teaches film and literature at the University of Maryland, and is a regular contributor to the Belfast film journal *Cinephile*... JOSEPH MCBRIDE and MICHAEL WILMINGTON are working on a book on the films of John Ford... GILBERTO PEREZ-GUILLERMO was trained as a theoretical physicist, and is currently a Fellow at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He has written criticism for *Film Comment* and for the Spanish magazine *Revista de Occidente*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WARNER BROS. for *Klute*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Summer of '42*, *The Searchers*, *Inside Daisy Clover*.
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *Domicile Conjugal*, *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*, *Baby, the Rain Must Fall*.
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Red Baron*.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Love with the Proper Stranger*.
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20th CENTURY-FOX/MAYSLES FILMS for *Gimme Shelter*.
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ABC/CINERAMA for *The Touch*.
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MAYA FILMS for *Private Road*.
GOODTIMES ENTERPRISES/SAGITTARIUS/HEMDALE for *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*.
HUNGAROFILM for *Horizont*.
SOVEXPORTFILM for *King Lear*.
LES FILMS DU CARROSSE/CINETEL, PARIS for *Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent*.

CORONA/GIBE PRODUCTION for *Trafic*.

PARC FILM/STUDIOS MATHONET/TAUNUS FILMS/ORTF for *Rendez-vous à Bray*.

FILMS LA BOETIE for photograph of Claude Chabrol and Orson Welles. N.E.F. DIFFUSION for *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*.

ATLANTIC FILM/ANTITHEATER X FILM, MUNICH for *Whity*.

TELEPOOL, MUNICH for *WR—Mysteries of the Organism*.

MERCHANT-IVORY PRODUCTIONS for *Savages*.

VIDES for *Nel Nome del Padre*.

PEA for *The Decameron*.

CLESI for *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

RAI-RADIOTELEVISIONE ITALIANA for *L'Hospite, Durante l'Estate*.

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LES FILMS DE LA COMMUNE for *Valparaiso Valparaiso*.

PRIYA FILMS for *Siddhartha and the City*.

CORRESPONDENTS

HOLLYWOOD: Axel Madsen
ITALY: Giulio Cesare Castello
FRANCE: Gilles Jacob, Rui Nogueira
AUSTRALIA: Charles Higham
SCANDINAVIA: Ib Monty
SPAIN: Francisco Aranda
POLAND: Boleslaw Michalek
INDIA: Amita Malik

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—T.L.S.

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Tristana

a film by Luis Buñuel

Set in Toledo in the late twenties and early thirties, *Tristana*, Buñuel's latest film, is the story of a young Spanish girl who is seduced by her guardian. Illustrated with stills. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

Belle de Jour

a film by Luis Buñuel

Adapted from Joseph Kessel's novel of the same title, *Belle de Jour* is about a bored young woman who indulges her masochistic tendencies by working in a brothel in the afternoons. Illustrated with stills. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

Pandora's Box (Lulu)

a film by G. W. Pabst

This story of a woman who leads a number of men to their ruin before herself being murdered by Jack the Ripper, is based on two plays by Frank Wedekind. The film is particularly memorable for the performance of Louise Brooks as Lulu. Illustrated with stills. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

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a film by John Ford & Dudley Nichols

One of the great Western classics, in which a group of misfits cross New Mexico in a stagecoach, under constant threat of attack by Geronimo. This edition is based on Dudley Nichols's original screenplay. Illustrated with stills. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

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a film by Jiri Menzel & Bohumil Hrabal

One of the best films to come out of the reinvigorated Czech cinema, giving the director an international reputation. Illustrated with stills. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

Oedipus Rex

a film by Pier Paolo Pasolini

Pasolini's film is one of the finest renderings of a classical Greek subject that the cinema has produced. This edition is based on Pasolini's original screenplay. Illustrated with stills. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

Blow-Up

a film by Michelangelo Antonioni

Blow-Up was Antonioni's first feature outside Italy. Controversy about its form and content has been widespread, but whatever the 'correct' interpretation, the script published in this edition indicates the careful planning that Antonioni put into it from its conception. Illustrated with stills. Cloth £2.10, paper £1.05.

Greed

a film by Erich von Stroheim

The complete text of Stroheim's enduring masterpiece of the silent cinema, together with details of the three-hour version finally released. Illustrated with stills. Cloth £4.20, paper £2.10.

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FILM GUIDE

ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES, THE (MGM-EMI)

Vincent Price borrows the ten curses of Pharaoh to avenge his wife's death at the hands of incompetent surgeons. Unimaginative horror lumberingly directed, and despite expensive art-deco sets and ingenious props not nearly as winning as it takes itself. (Joseph Cotten, Hugh Griffith; director, Robert Fuest.)

**BALLAD OF JOE HILL, THE (British Lion)

Bo Widerberg's picaresque biography of the Swedish-born folk-hero of the American labour movement. Begins splendidly and freshly, as the young immigrant discovers America; but Widerberg seemingly can't resist sentimentalising his theme of socialism through joy. (Thommy Berggren, Anja Schmidt.) Reviewed.

*BANANAS (United Artists)

Woody Allen's second film as director. A typical bag of joke allsorts including, among sundry irreverent irrelevancies, Allen's adventures as an American tourist in a Latin American dictatorship. Some very funny bits and pieces, but just as many failures and too little discipline. (Louise Lasser.)

**BEST AGE, THE (ETV)

Likeable Czech comedy of subfusc observation, focused on the old-age pensioner models and other frequenters of a provincial art school. The director worked with Milos Forman on all three of his Czech films, and has the touch if not quite the timing. (Jan Stockl, Hana Brejchova; director, Jaroslav Papousek.)

BILLY JACK (Warner Bros.)

Brave but simple-minded plea for universal brotherhood as a half-breed Indian defends a multi-racial Arizona Freedom School from the taunts of small-town bigots. Improvisation, documentary detail and a kind of primitive conviction almost induce surrender to the disjointed melodrama which sugars the message. (Tom Laughlin, Delores Taylor; director, T. C. Frank.)

*BLUE WATER, WHITE DEATH (Fox)

Superior underwater safari documentary, about the tracking down of the elusive, carnivorous great white shark. A highly professional, interestingly obsessed camera quest. (Directors, Peter Gimbel, James Lipscomb.)

*BOMBAY TALKIE

(Contemporary)
Another Indian romance from James Ivory which begins promisingly against the endearing studio background of a Bombay musical spectacular, but disappointingly tails off into embarrassing melodrama as an American woman novelist falls for the silken charms of an Indian film star. A few incidental insights submerged by indifferent performances. (Jennifer Kendal, Shashi Kapoor, Zia Mohyeddin.)

**CARNAL KNOWLEDGE

(Avco Embassy)
A platform for Jules Feiffer's familiar cynicism, tracing Jack Nicholson and Arthur Garfunkel's rich but unrewarding sex life through college and into drained

middle age. Some exquisitely accurate (and censor-baiting) dialogue and meticulous characterisation, but Mike Nichols gives Feiffer full rein and the film never catches up with him. (Candice Bergen, Ann-Margret.) Reviewed.

*DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS

(Target International)
Delphine Seyrig arrives at a Marienbad hotel in Ostend and is revealed to be an ageless Hungarian vampire countess. Consciously freakish and sometimes foolish horror film; but a star for Miss Seyrig. (John Karlen, Danièle Ouimet; director, Harry Kumel.)

**DEAREST LOVE (Gala)

Louis Malle's funny, lyrical, nostalgic and utterly unsensational film about the growing pains of a youngest son liberated from his Oedipal miseries when he's deflowered by his mother in a moment of absent-minded tenderness. Set in the Fifties, it has an unforced period charm, as strong on social observation as it is on psychological detail. (Lea Massari, Benoit Ferreux.)

DESERTER, THE (Paramount)

Undistinguished Italian-made Burt Kennedy Western on the *Dirty Dozen* theme. An anthology of hackneyed heroics as a group of misfits destroy an Apache stronghold, briefly enlivened by passable action and a colourful cameo from John Huston. (Bekim Fehmiu, Richard Crenna.)

DEVILS, THE (Warner Bros.)

Ken Russell's view of the affairs of the crazed nuns of Loudun and the trial and execution of Father Grandier. Revue sketch mummery and grotesque physical sensationalism blended to uniquely vulgar effect. (Oliver Reed, Vanessa Redgrave, Dudley Sutton.)

DIARY OF A MAD HOUSEWIFE (Rank)

Carrie Snodgrass gives a subtle performance as the housewife driven via adultery from group therapy to divorce by the rantings of her status-seeking husband, but it's not subtle enough to conceal the tired mechanics of the plot and dialogue that sounds as if it's been culled alternately from women's magazines and sociology textbooks. (Richard Benjamin, Frank Langella; director, Frank Perry.)

**GIMME SHELTER (Fox)

The Maysles Brothers' explosive record of the Rolling Stones in America, culminating in the notorious Altamont concert. Too neatly structured round its murderous climax; all the same a sobering rehearsal of the questions raised by 'direct cinema' and its nervous tangle with real and cinematic truth. Reviewed.

*GO-BETWEEN, THE

(MGM-EMI)
Loosey's masterly adaptation of the L. P. Hartley novel, with passion and impropriety slowly filtering through the tea-cup chatter and muslin parasols of an Edwardian summer. A Pinter script and a convincing performance from Dominic Guard as the self-centred child who precipitates the tragedy are not the least of its considerable merits. (Julie Christie, Alan Bates, Margaret Leighton.)

GREAT BATTLE, THE

(Columbia)
Hefty Soviet war reconstruction, mainly concerned with refighting the great tank battle at Kursk. Usual heavy deployment of military might, to confused effect; vapid English dubbing. (Director, Yuri Ozerov.)

HORSEMEN, THE (Columbia)

Omar Sharif as an Afghan chief's son, setting out to prove himself a better man than his father by crossing the mountains with a

broken leg. Limping, simplistic script by Dalton Trumbo, once the film leaves behind the ferocious Afghan horse game that seems its *raison d'être*. (Jack Palance, Leigh Taylor-Young; director, John Frankenheimer.)

*KING LEAR (Columbia)

Lear in a cold climate. Peter Brook's version goes for the play's essence, chopping the text where it seems irrelevant to his purpose. As an interpretation it's fine—fresh, consistent, conspicuously well acted; but as filmed Shakespeare it's not within shouting distance of Kozintsev. (Paul Scofield, Irene Worth, Alan Webb.) Reviewed.

**KLUTE (Warner Bros.)

Astonishing second film by Alan Pakula which starts off as a Chandler thriller and ends up as Kafka nightmare. The nearest thing to a true film noir in years, with a stunning performance by Jane Fonda as the callgirl who finds herself trapped in the dark web of contemporary New York. (Donald Sutherland.) Reviewed.

LADY IN THE CAR WITH GLASSES AND A GUN, THE (Columbia)

Grimly suspenseless thriller detailing the tribulations of a neurotic secretary framed for murder and scared of calling the police. In its context of overworked *déjà-vu*, Stéphane Audran's presence immediately signals a mock-Chabrol *dénouement*, and despite some with-it camera tricks, the murderer's voice-over confession confirms just how old-fashioned the enterprise really is. (Samantha Eggar, Oliver Reed; director, Anatole Litvak.)

*LE MANS (Fox)

Straightforward, strangely downbeat racing saga which emphasises the emptiness of the drivers' lives whenever they're off the track. Consistent with this approach, the races and crashes provide plenty of excitement, but the human interest doesn't. (Steve McQueen, Siegfried Rauch, Elga Andersen; director, Lee H. Katzin.)

LITTLE FAUSS AND BIG HALSEY (Paramount)

Sidney Furie returns to the dirt track with an exploitable and hollow-centred tortoise-and-hare fable calculatedly built around the cuter traits of his two stars. The bike riding is all right, but with Furie's predilection for obscure angles, it's hard to see very much of it. (Michael J. Pollard, Robert Redford.)

**LITTLE MURDERS (Fox)

Alan Arkin's debut as director with Jules Feiffer's adaptation of his black comedy about schizophrenic violence in America's urban jungles. Some awkward moments, but the performances are uniformly abrasive, caught between caricature and recognisable character, and the dialogue is, inevitably, superb. (Elliott Gould, Marcia Rodd, Donald Sutherland, Alan Arkin.)

*LOVE OF LIFE (Rank)

Film portrait of veteran pianist Arthur Rubinstein, who reminisces about his career, rehearses, plays, and potters about the places of his life. A jaunty, genially idiosyncratic, philosophical personality engagingly recorded. (Directors, François Reichenbach, S. Gérard Patris.)

**McCABE AND MRS. MILLER

(Warner Bros.)
Robert Altman's offbeat comedy Western about a small-time gambler and an ambitious whore forced out of their depth when big business starts investing in the Northwest frontier. Impeccable period detail helps create an atmosphere of desperate sadness that no amount of surface wise-cracking can entirely dispel. (Warren Beatty, Julie Christie.) Reviewed.

**ON A CLEAR DAY YOU CAN SEE FOREVER (Paramount)
Barbra Streisand in irresistible form, as a chain-smoking New Yorker reliving a Regency reincarnation under hypnosis from psychiatrist Yves Montand. A Minnelli musical with more than a touch of the old easy elegance, though encumbered by too much plot and too few numbers. (Bob Newhart.)

*ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVITCH

(Cinerama)
Sombre adaptation of Solzhenitsyn's documentary novel about life in a Stalinist labour camp. Painstakingly accurate detail, bleakly photographed by Sven Nykvist, of the compromise of survival in confinement. The cold is felt; the characters, though, seem as frozen as their settings. (Tom Courtenay, James Maxwell; director, Caspar Wrede.)

*PANIC IN NEEDLE PARK, THE (Fox)

Sympathetic though often lumbering view of the sordid landscape of the New York drug scene. Location shooting and authentic peripheral detail undermined by over-calculated performances at the centre and garish echoes of *Midnight Cowboy*. (Al Pacino, Kitty Winn, Alan Vint; director, Jerry Schatzberg.)

**PRIVATE ROAD (Maya)

Encouraging second film from the *Bronco Bullfrog* team, about a classless young writer and a girl from Esher. Laconic, honestly contemporary and full of individual observation and character. (Bruce Robinson, Michael Feast; director, Barney Platts-Mills.) Reviewed.

PUPPET ON A CHAIN

(Scotia Barber)
Poker-faced American Interpol agent investigates drug smuggling in colourful Amsterdam. A nasty piece of work from Alistair MacLean, humourless, sadistic, and put together without a vestige of style. (Sven-Bertil Taube, Barbara Perkins; director, Geoffrey Reeve.)

**TAKING OFF (Rank)

Milos Forman in America with an amused, quizzical, refreshingly tolerant look at the generation gap as two parents go looking for their fugitive daughter and find a side of themselves they never knew about. Immensely funny, and Forman's eye is as sharp as it ever was on his home ground. (Buck Henry, Lynn Carlin.) Reviewed.

**THX 1138 (Warner Bros.)

Futuristic story, about the one man who manages to break free from a tranquillised, computerised, sterile society. Unadventurous scripting, but a lively awareness of graphic values in setting up the dehumanised environment. (Robert Duvall, Donald Pleasence; director, George Lucas.)

**TOUCH, THE (Cinerama)

Bergman probes the breakdown of a middle-class marriage (and the shortcomings of Swedish materialism) as a model wife succumbs to a rootless foreigner. Bibi Andersson is brilliant as the reluctant adulteress, but Elliott Gould, scripted in a kind of Linguaphone English, is unconvincing as the irresistible force. (Max von Sydow.) Reviewed.

**VANISHING POINT (Fox)

Intermittently lively odyssey across America as a loner challenges time, the police and his own hang-ups to drive a supercharged car across highway, field and desert. Irretrievably marred by explanatory flashbacks and the significant flotsam and jetsam he meets on the road. (Barry Newman, Cleavon Little; director, Richard Sarafian.)

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